

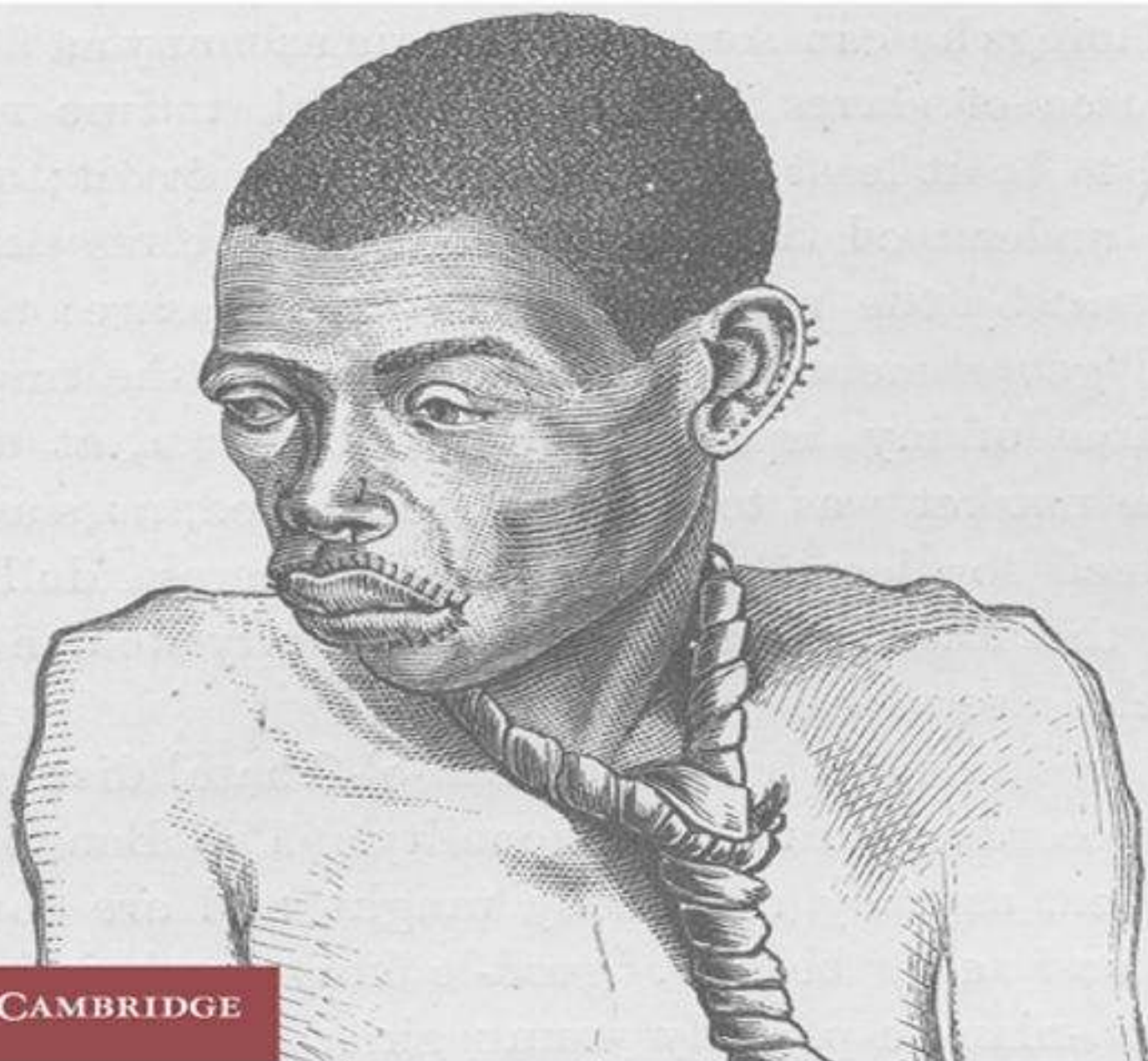
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TRANSFORMATIONS IN SLAVERY

A History of Slavery in Africa

THIRD EDITION

PAUL E. LOVEJOY



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Transformations in Slavery

This history of African slavery from the fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries examines how indigenous African slavery developed within an international context. Paul E. Lovejoy discusses the medieval Islamic slave trade and the Atlantic trade as well as the enslavement process and the marketing of slaves. He considers the impact of European abolition and assesses slavery's role in African history. The book corrects the accepted interpretation that African slavery was mild and resulted in the slaves' assimilation. Instead, slaves were used extensively in production, although the exploitation methods and the relationships to world markets differed from those in the Americas. Nevertheless, slavery in Africa, like slavery in the Americas, developed from its position on the periphery of capitalist Europe. This new edition revises all statistical material on the slave trade demography and incorporates recent research and an updated bibliography.

Paul E. Lovejoy is a Distinguished Research Professor at York University and holds the Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, director of the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples, and a member of the UNESCO "Slave Route" Project. Lovejoy's recent publications include *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (2010) and *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora* (2009). He is the editor of the Harriet Tubman Series on the African Diaspora for Africa World Press. He has received several awards, including an honorary doctorate from the University of Stirling in 2007, the President's Research Award of Merit from York University in 2009, and the Distinguished Africanist Award from the University of Texas at Austin in 2010.

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Transformations in Slavery

A History of Slavery in Africa

PAUL E. LOVEJOY

York University, Ontario



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Contents

<i>List of Maps and Tables</i>	page x
<i>Note on Currencies, Weights, and Measures</i>	xii
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Preface to the Second Edition</i>	xvii
<i>Preface to the Third Edition</i>	xxi
1 Africa and Slavery	I
2 On the Frontiers of Islam, 1400–1600	24
3 The Export Trade in Slaves, 1600–1800	45
4 The Enslavement of Africans, 1600–1800	66
5 The Organization of Slave Marketing, 1600–1800	88
6 Relationships of Dependency, 1600–1800	108
7 The Nineteenth-Century Slave Trade	135
8 Slavery and “Legitimate Trade” on the West African Coast	160
9 Slavery in the Savanna during the Era of the <i>Jihads</i>	185
10 Slavery in Central, Southern, and Eastern Africa in the Nineteenth Century	219
11 The Abolitionist Impulse	244
12 Slavery in the Political Economy of Africa	267
<i>Epilogue</i>	281
<i>Appendix: Chronology of Measures against Slavery</i>	285
<i>Notes</i>	293
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	355
<i>Index</i>	365

Maps and Tables

Maps

1	The Islamic Slave Trade in the Sixteenth Century	<i>page 26</i>
2	The Kingdom of Kongo and the Gulf of Guinea in the Sixteenth Century	39
3	The Commercial Centers of Central Africa in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	94
4	The West African Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century	96
5	Major Concentrations of Slaves in Nineteenth-Century West Africa	173
6	The Eastern Sudan in the Nineteenth Century	203

Tables

1.1	Slave Departures from Africa: The Atlantic Trade	19
1.2	Estimated Departures from Embarkation Points in Africa, 1501–1867	19
2.1	Trans-Saharan Slave Trade, 650–1600	27
2.2	Red Sea and East African Slave Trade, 800–1600	27
2.3	Estimates of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1450–1600	37
3.1	Estimated Slave Departures from Africa, 1500–1800	46
3.2	Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1601–1700	47
3.3	Atlantic Slave Trade by National Carrier, 1701–1800	48
3.4	Regional Origins of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Trade	50

3.5	West African Slave Prices: Semidecadal Averages, 1663–1775	51
3.6	Bight of Benin Slave Trade, 1601–1730	55
3.7	Slave Departures across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, 1600–1800	61
3.8	Weighted Mean Ratios of Males and Children Carried in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1663–1809	63
3.9	Estimated Population of Trade Slaves, 1600–1800	64
4.1	West African Slave Departures across the Atlantic, 1650–1800	78
7.1	Slave Departures from Africa in the Nineteenth Century	138
7.2	Weighted Mean Ratios of Males and Children, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1810–1867	139
7.3	Slave Prices on the Atlantic Coast of Africa, 1783–1850 (£ sterling)	139
7.4	Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1801–1866	141
7.5	The Scale of the Nonslave Trade: Contract and Other Forms of Servile Labor	147
7.6	East African Slave Departures to Arabia, Persia, and India, 1801–1896	151
7.7	The Slave Trade of East Africa in the Nineteenth Century	151
7.8	Origins of Male Slaves in Asante, 1837–1842	157
9.1	Demographic Profile of Slave Populations in the Western Sudan, 1904	187
9.2	Foundation Dates of Nupe <i>Tungazi</i>	201
9.3	Ethnic Origins of Settlers on <i>Tungazi</i>	201
11.1	Population Increases, Selected “Cercles,” Western Sudan	265

Note on Currencies, Weights, and Measures

A wide variety of currencies were used in Africa during the period of this study. Wherever possible, I have converted local currencies to pound sterling. I have also used the Maria Theresa thaler (MT\$), which circulated widely in the northern Savanna and East Africa from the end of the eighteenth century. Cowries were also used in large parts of West Africa. Unless otherwise specified, all weights and measures are metric.

Preface

This is a work of synthesis. As such, it suffers from the same deficiencies that all studies of its sort do. I have examined some parts of the continent in much greater detail than others in preparing this book, and I have relied on secondary sources extensively, although there has been some use of primary material. Very likely there are points with which specialists will disagree, because the scope of the topic makes it impossible to be fully aware of the debates that affect particular periods and areas. Nonetheless, the study of African history, and more specifically the analysis of slavery in Africa, has suffered from the opposite problem to that of oversynthesis. There is virtually no historical framework in which the reconstruction of the history of slavery can be set. The numerous local studies that exist are uneven in quality and frequently are presented in a quasi-historical setting that is fraught with enormous methodological difficulties. Often studies of adjacent areas make no reference to each other. Sometimes, analysis is divorced from all outside influence, as if slavery in Africa existed in a vacuum. There are some brilliant local studies that have their own implications in terms of the study of slavery in general, but these, too, suffer from a failure to place the particular case in the context of Africa as a whole, or even specific regions within Africa.

With these problems in mind, I set out to write an interpretative essay, titled “Indigenous African Slavery,” which was presented at a conference on new directions in slave studies at the University of Waterloo in April 1979. I uncovered so much material that a more extensive project was necessary to consider the issues identified. That essay is in part a bibliographical study that can be used to accompany this book. It is incomplete, even with respect to relatively available materials, and it does not examine the extensive archival information that can be used for a study of this sort, although some archival material has been surveyed. In short, the collection and examination of source material continues, but the present volume is a necessary step in the further study of slavery.

This book attempts a more sophisticated interpretation than was possible for the Waterloo conference. The same basic framework will be evident: an effort to delimit regions within Africa that enable meaningful analysis and a periodization that identifies major turning points in the history of slavery. It will be clear that detailed studies of particular topics and areas are still essential. This is not a substitute for such research. Rather this book provides a thematic study of African history from the perspective of slavery. Its major thesis is that slavery was transformed, in part because of external influences and in part because of the dynamics of internal forces. On the most general level, it argues that Africa responded to outside influences to a greater extent than it influenced the outside world. The more important questions of how Africans shaped that response and the means through which outside influence was minimized are considered in detail. The implication of this thesis is that slavery was a central institution in many parts of Africa, and the study examines where and when this became the case.

The book should be seen as an introduction to the history of slavery in Africa. More specialized studies already exist that treat particular problems, often for much more limited periods. These include the analysis of the overseas slave trade, the abolition crusade, and the relationship between slavery and imperialism; but even these are often limited even within the general theme of study. The following scholars, whose works are cited in the bibliography, deserve special mention. Philip D. Curtin pioneered the study of the trans-Atlantic slave trade when he attempted a preliminary census in 1969. Today this study is out of date, superseded by more detailed research summarized in the appropriate chapters below. Of the many abolition studies, those of Suzanne Miers, Seymour Drescher, Roger Anstey, and François Renault are the most important here, but each has its drawbacks. Miers concentrates on the British and the last decades of the nineteenth century. Drescher and Anstey each focus on the forces of abolition in Great Britain, although their studies of the slave trade and the effects on Africa have modified the earlier work of Curtin. Renault provides the most comprehensive examination of French abolition by concentrating on Cardinal Lavigerie and his movement. Renault and Miers provide a good introduction to slavery in Africa during the era of European abolition. All of these studies assist in the historical reconstruction of African slavery, but invariably their treatment of slavery in Africa is of secondary importance to their main purpose: the external trade and European attitudes. These valuable contributions have been particularly useful here because, in the interpretation presented later in the book, the external trade and European abolition are both considered extremely important influences on African history and the evolution of slavery.

Humphrey and Allen Fisher, John Grace, and Frederick Cooper have completed book-length studies of slavery in Africa. The Fishers' interpretative essay on the Islamic heritage of slavery in Africa is based primarily on the observations of Gustav Nachtigal from the 1870s. It is broadly conceived but draws on very limited sources. Grace's work is largely on Sierra Leone, with some

information on other areas of British influence along the West African coast. It is historical but not balanced. Cooper's study of plantation slavery in East Africa, summarized later here, is the most perceptive treatment of an individual slave system. This case is unique, for the major slave owners were not Africans but Omani Arabs, and hence some care has to be taken in order to place Cooper's study in the larger African setting.

Essays on slavery in different contexts have been collected into several published volumes, including those by Claude Meillassoux, Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, James L. Watson, John Ralph Willis, and myself, and others will be forthcoming shortly. These cover diverse cases and present various thematic approaches. The Meillassoux volume contains the interpretations of a dynamic school of French Marxist anthropologists, and Meillassoux published a theoretical study that was an outgrowth of his association with the contributors to this volume. Miers and Kopytoff have done comparable work in the English-speaking world; their introduction provides a theoretical perspective as valuable as that of Meillassoux and his associates. The Willis volume includes specialized studies of slavery in the Islamic context, whereas Watson's collection provides a comparative perspective for Asian and African cases. My own collection focuses on ideology, providing a forum for discussion between those who have been most strongly influenced by the French Marxists and those who are most influenced by Miers and Kopytoff. The trouble with all these short studies, invaluable as they are, is that as the number increases so does the confusion for the nonspecialist.

This brings us back to the present endeavor. It is an intermediate stage in research and analysis. Its contribution is intended primarily on the historical level, that is, on the plane of chronological reconstruction, although the chronological framework is a bare beginning. Because historical reconstruction has been so minimal in earlier studies, there are bound to be mistakes here. Furthermore, the context of recent research has contributed to the general problem of interpretation in three ways. Firstly, the climate of research has been romantic. The aim of many historians has been to glorify the African past for reasons related to the emergent nationalism in Africa and the sentiments of people of African descent in the Americas. This has made it difficult to discuss the inglorious past. Secondly, the development of African history as a subdiscipline has grown from almost nothing to a large body of data and analysis. This development requires periodic syntheses such as this one; however, the speed with which new material becomes available inhibits such synthesis and furthermore reveals the thin base on which much earlier work has relied. Finally, the political climate in Africa has been a difficult one in which to do sensitive, critical research, both for foreigners and nationals. The hazards of examining archival materials and interviewing elders vary as always, but these have often been the least of a researcher's problems in recent years. Police pressure, university censorship, and academic rivalries in close quarters have sometimes been more serious obstacles.

This will not be the last interpretation of the history of slavery in Africa. Indeed, my own interest in the subject has grown with the writing of this book. The quantity of material that is available in published and archival form is so voluminous that different thematic studies become more and more desirable. Some of these possibilities will be readily apparent, as will the need for a more detailed examination of specific aspects of local and regional history. This book, therefore, is an assessment of the topic initially brought forth in 1982.

The individuals who have assisted in one way or another in the preparation of this book include those who have made material available to me, those who have engaged in an ongoing dialogue on aspects of the topic over the past few years, and those who have read or commented on specific parts of the manuscript. I mention these individuals as a further reference to sources, for in most cases the scholars are actively engaged in research on the topic of slavery: Mordacai Abir, Frederick Cooper, Dennis Cordell, Philip D. Curtin, Mark Duffill, Raymond Dumett, Jan Hogendorn, Allen Isaacman, Martin Klein, Norman Klein, Igor Kopytoff, Patrick Manning, Suzanne Miers, Joseph C. Miller, David Northrup, Richard Roberts, David Tambo, and Jan Vansina. David Eltis, Stanley Engerman, Henry Gemery, and Joseph Miller critiqued my efforts to synthesize the material available on the volume of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and, along with Pieter Emmer and Robert Stein, Miller and Eltis also made available unpublished material. Myron Echenberg, John Fage, Allen Isaacman, Sydney Kanya-Forstner, Martin Klein, Patrick Manning, Joseph Miller, and Emmanuel Terray read all or substantial portions of the manuscript, and hopefully most of their criticisms have been satisfied. John Priestley kindly undertook the translation of several French quotations. Several research assistants were helpful in tracking down material; these include Geoffrey Da Silva, Murray Hoffbauer, Stephen Giles, Mary Pat O'Reilly, and Marc Epprecht. I would also like to thank Michael Craton for the opportunity to present the preliminary paper on indigenous African slavery that provided the foundation for this larger study. Financial assistance for the collection of material has come from York University. It has been possible to devote time to writing this book because of a Faculty of Arts Fellowship from York University for 1979–1980, which released me from most of my teaching and administrative responsibilities. York University has also been particularly generous in providing secretarial assistance, and I would like to thank the many people in Secretarial Services, under the direction of Doris Brillinger, who have worked on various parts of the manuscript. Diane Jenner and Michelle Srebrolow also typed portions of the manuscript. Finally, the Interlibrary Loan department of Scott Library, York University, has been responsible for the tremendous task of locating the often very obscure materials that have been essential to this study.

Paul E. Lovejoy
Toronto, Canada

Preface to the Second Edition

Twenty years have passed since I first offered an overview of the history of slavery in Africa (Lovejoy 1979). The first edition of this book was my attempt to relate the internal development of slavery in Africa to external forces. My approach was to use the newly available quantifiable data on the scale, timing, and direction of the slave trade across the Atlantic to explore the political, economic, and social history of Africa, looking for correlations in the trans-Atlantic trade with developments in western Africa. From an Africanist perspective, such an approach also required consideration of the Islamic trade in slaves, Indian Ocean patterns, and Dutch use of slaves at the Cape of Good Hope. My approach tried to tie the known dimensions of the external trade in slaves to a history of slavery in Africa. Since the publication of the first edition, there has been considerably more research done on the demography of the slave trade, resulting most especially in the combination of various data into a single database, the W.E.B. Du Bois database, which draws on records of more than 27,000 slaving voyages between Africa and the Americas.¹

In preparing the second edition, I have relied on the Du Bois database, although in certain minor ways, the Du Bois data have been supplemented.² In the first edition, I generated my own synthesis of available data on the scale of the slave trade, drawing heavily on Curtin's earlier work (1969). This overview was in turn subjected to critique and revision.³ The Du Bois database makes much of the debate over the initial Curtin census (1969) and the subsequent revisions obsolete. In addition, other statistical studies have meant that most of the tables in the first edition have had to be modified. Hence most of the tables in this edition are new, although reference to the earlier literature is retained for purposes of comparison. To take account of the new demographic data, I have altered the discussion of the various tables accordingly, and additional references have been provided to reflect ongoing scholarship on the history of Africa and the role of slavery in that history. Where appropriate, I have

qualified or otherwise modified my analysis in exploring the implications of the revised figures.

Although I have relied on the Du Bois database for my analysis of the demography of the slave trade, I am well aware of numerous weaknesses in its conceptualization and implementation. The database is weak on Portuguese and Spanish sources, and hence is less reliable in studying the trade to Brazil and Hispanic America, especially in the early period, than the trade to the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Not only is there a need for caution because of the extent of lost or corrupted data,⁴ but much of the database is based on derived statistics that warrant additional caution. To calculate the scale of the trade, scholars have been forced to make a variety of assumptions, such as the carrying capacity of ships on the basis of ship tonnage, or the loss of slaves during the trans-Atlantic passage, in order to standardize material for analysis. In using the database, therefore, I am aware of the risks in presenting a false degree of certainty. Methodologically, I have attempted to use the imputed statistics of the Du Bois database to verify or otherwise inform historical developments in Africa that are also documented in other ways. The analysis suggests that demographic data can reveal significant issues of history, in this case the impact of forced migration through slavery on the history of Africa.

In developing a thesis that emphasizes the transformation of servile institutions under the pressures of the slave trade, particularly the trans-Atlantic and Islamic slave trades, I have sought to place African events and processes at center stage, despite my emphasis on the importance of external influences. Pursuing insights that I gained from Walter Rodney, I have focused on the impact of the slave trade on change in Africa, fully recognizing that transformations always occur in context, which is inevitably local.⁵ Hence it is not a question of whether internal or external influences were more important, but how these influences affected the course of history. I have not been interested in demonstrating that the trans-Atlantic slave trade caused African underdevelopment, although I think that the evidence demonstrates a causal relationship. Rather, I have wanted to explore the ways in which the demand for slaves in the Americas and elsewhere affected the political economy of the areas from where the slaves came, and in so doing to demonstrate the interaction between local and global forces. Critics, however, have sought to demonstrate that internal economic, political, and social factors were so overwhelmingly dominant or otherwise impervious to external influence that there were no transformations within Africa that resulted from the slave trade. For Eltis, economic indicators are used to demonstrate the economic marginality of the slave trade on African economies.⁶ For Inikori, slavery did not exist in Africa during the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the transformation that occurred took place in the Americas in a racialized context.⁷ Thornton, on the other hand, argues that slavery was so pervasive in Africa that the Americas could be settled by slaves only because of their prior availability.⁸ For Thornton, the extent of transformation has been overstated.

Based on available demographic data, it seems clear that the impact of trans-Atlantic slavery varied considerably, and much of the impact was in fact concentrated in relatively restricted regions of western Africa. Similarly, the trans-Saharan slave trade and Indian Ocean trade were concentrated in their impact, affecting areas along clearly marked trade routes and political frontiers that changed over time but are nonetheless discernable in the historical record. The analysis is supported by the simulated demographic study of Manning, which attempts to demonstrate the probable range of impact of different slave regimes.⁹ As Manning also argues, enclaves of external influence had a ripple effect into the interior, which by the nineteenth century meant that slavery was widespread in many parts of Africa, not only in areas that had become enmeshed in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In this book, I explore changes in the political economy that account for the spread of slave use within Africa, specifically exploring the effects of Islam, external markets, and the actions of slaves and former slaves themselves in the debate over abolition and emancipation.

Theoretically, I draw attention to the process of change that resulted in the intensified use of slaves as a “mode of production” based on slavery, in which the institutionalization of enslavement, the formal structure of trade, and the codification of slavery in law and custom guaranteed that slavery was central to the production process. The conceptual framework that emphasizes slavery as a system, and not simply an institution, is intended to demonstrate a fundamental difference between slavery in those places in the diaspora where many of the enslaved were forced to go, including the Americas and the Islamic world north of the Sahara, and slavery in sub-Saharan Africa itself. Enslaved Africans were found in Africa as well as in the Americas and North Africa, but they were taken to distant lands as slaves; they were not enslaved there. I argue that the specific features of slavery as a mode of production in Africa harnessed the mechanisms of enslavement with the slave trade and slave use.¹⁰ Elsewhere, enslavement was not an integrated part of the slave system, other than through the biological reproduction of slaves themselves and the purchase of slaves from Africa. There was no such geographical and structural separation between enslavement and the trade and use of slaves. In Africa, the structure of slavery that underpinned the social and economic formations of the largest states and societies was closely tied to enslavement itself. The book explores the implications of these differences, but only in the African context.

Many issues arising from the analysis of the transformations in the political economy of slavery that are presented here cannot be examined in a revised edition. The extent to which local situations were influenced by the market for slaves, and how that influence was shaped, requires detailed, local studies, such as those that have since been published.¹¹ The available studies, many of which are included in the revised, and expanded, bibliography in this edition, demonstrate that the concentration of slaves in the export sector and along trade routes led to the transformation of local conditions and society in ways that are comparable to those discussed here. Because the centralization of slaving

activity at specific places on the coast directed the flow of people, the slave trade thereby affected the ethno-linguistic identities of the enslaved. Although unwillingly, people had to adjust to the forces of change. Moreover, slaves of similar ethno-linguistic background, including those who accommodated themselves to the dominant-language community, tended to be concentrated in specific places in the Americas, and indeed in the Islamic world, so that slavery had the effect of shaping the ethnic map of the Americas, as well as altering the ethnic map of Africa. However, the issues relating to the connections between the African homelands of the enslaved and the diasporas of slavery in the Americas and the Islamic world, including the continuities and disjunctures of diaspora history, are not explored in this study. Nonetheless, I believe that understanding the history of servile institutions in Africa is essential to the study of slavery in the Americas and elsewhere. Even though the story of these influences and connections is beginning to be understood,¹² a full study of ethnicity, historical continuity, and cultural change is warranted, although it is surely beyond the scope of this study. This revised book is intended to provide useful background for an analysis of the linkages between diaspora and Africa.

I wish to thank David Eltis, David Richardson, and Stephen Behrendt for providing me with access to their compilation and analysis of the Du Bois data, to Jose Curto and Ivan Elbl, who read portions of the text, to Robin Law for his continuing advice and criticism, to Manolo Florentino for insisting on a second edition, to Ismael Musah Montana, Ibrahim Hamza, and Kwabena Akurang-Parry for assistance in tracking down new materials, and to Michelle Srebrowlow, who revised the bibliography.

Paul Lovejoy
Toronto, Canada

Preface to the Third Edition

I first attempted an overview of the history of slavery in Africa in 1979, in a paper first published in *Historical Reflections*, with responses from Igor Kopytoff and Frederick Cooper.¹ Since then, there has been a great outburst in the study of the history of slavery, both within continental Africa and in the context of the development of the African diaspora in the Americas, the Islamic world, the Indian Ocean, and indeed Europe. My initial synthesis was prompted by the dialogue between francophone and anglophone scholarship, as represented in the collections of essays edited by Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*,² and by Claude Meillassoux, *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*,³ both published in 1975. Moreover, my reflections and then considerable study of the topic were also set in the context of a series of informal seminars, largely held on the floor in Martin Klein's living room in Toronto, where a number of kindred souls read and studied Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, and then his "precapitalist modes of production." The group was attempting to come to terms with the preponderance of evidence about the pervasiveness of slavery in African history and society. It was clear that historical and anthropological research were in the process of confronting slavery. Given that Philip D. Curtin and Jan Vansina had been my mentors at the University of Wisconsin during my graduate school days, this trajectory is perhaps not surprising.

The purpose of this preface is to evaluate the progression of research on the history of slavery since the initial publication of *Transformations in Slavery* in 1983, and its updated second edition, published in 2000.⁴ My initial intention was to focus research on continental Africa to counter the false impression that Africa's involvement in the slave trade was somehow passive, ahistorical, and only of interest in examining victimization and seemingly progressive underdevelopment. Somehow, a careful reading of the anthropological and historical literature revealed that this approach was not connected with African history.

The challenge, therefore, was to make sense of what we know about the history of slavery in the context of political and economic change in Africa over the past several hundred years and how that related to the external traffic in enslaved Africans.

Since then, there has been a growing appreciation of the interconnectedness of African history with the development of the African diaspora, particularly in the Americas. Hence to examine how the study of the history of the descendants of Africans has progressed, it is now necessary to examine how African history was carried into diaspora. The study of slavery in Africa cannot be confined to continental questions any more than diaspora questions only require the study of how people adjusted to the oppression of enslavement.

There has been a great expansion in the study of slavery, as represented by the success of the journal *Slavery and Abolition*, and reflected in many other professional journals, scholarly series with publishers, and the establishment of programs, departments, centers, and institutes devoted to the study of slavery and the African diaspora. This scholarly output has been usefully combined into a bibliography that is annually updated in *Slavery and Abolition*, building on the early, pioneering bibliography of Joseph D. Miller.⁵ As a result, the bibliography in this revised edition has been shortened, and reference is made to the online bibliography. The activities of the UNESCO “Slave Route” Project also have highlighted the international focus on slavery, especially in relation to Africa. Significantly, UNESCO took the initiative in exploring the African past, first through the History of Africa project, but subsequently through a recognition of the African cultural heritage, such as at Ouidah in 1992, and more particularly in launching the UNESCO “Slave Route” Project in 1994. This initiative has strongly influenced my own commitment to demonstrating the importance of slavery in African history, as represented in this book and its revisions. Similarly, the persistence of contemporary forms of slavery has broadened the focus from the history of the African diaspora of the Americas, Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Islamic world to issues of social justice.

An overview of developments in historical scholarship, particularly since the publication of the second edition in 2000, demonstrates the wealth of documentation that is available on the subject of slavery and its importance in the history of Africa. It is no longer acceptable to generalize about slavery in Africa in some anthropological present or indeed timeless past. It is possible to document change and difference. The new scholarship is sensitive to gender issues, religion, and the varied nature of historical information and sources. My reading of much of this literature confirms the general-transformation thesis of my original publications, including an insistence on the recognition of regional differences and temporal trajectories. An overview of the published literature since the publication of the second edition of this book, let alone the first, would require a full-length study in itself. It is my general sense, nonetheless, that the “transformation thesis” propounded in the first edition has had an important influence on the course of research.

There is reason to publish a revised, third edition of *Transformations in Slavery* because of the trajectory of slave studies over the past thirty years. This book was conceived in the 1970s, when the presence of slavery in Africa was only beginning to draw the attention of scholars. Since then, there has been an explosion in the study of slavery, whether historically or in contemporary anthropology. It is now widely recognized how important slavery has been in the history of Africa, and indeed extending through the colonial era to the present, in some places.

The third edition updates the overview of the history of slavery in Africa and provides an assessment of recent research. The references in the notes and the bibliography have been updated to reflect the great expansion in the research and publication on slavery in Africa. The third edition specifically incorporates the revised estimates on scale and direction of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and reassesses the implications of the new data in terms of the regional impact on Africa. There have been important advances in studying the migration of Africans to the Americas, which is reflected in the slave voyage database, initially published by Cambridge and now online.

Transformations in Slavery specifically and deliberately focuses on continental Africa. Initially, the purpose was to confront the reality that there was slavery in the history of Africa, at a time when some romantic visionaries and hopeful nationalists wanted to deny the clear facts. The launch of the UNESCO “Slave Route” Project in 1994 marked a shift in research focus. It is now generally recognized that Africa and its people were fully enmeshed in the international system of slavery that stretched across the world and specifically tore at the fabric of African life. How to assess the changes that affected Africa and its people and the transformations that resulted from the web of slavery and its expansion was and remains the purpose of this book. The transformation thesis emphasizes the interplay between local, regional, and intercontinental forces and interactions that have affected the history of slavery in Africa, and by implication everywhere that Africans were taken.

Despite the focus on continental Africa, the study of the transformations in slavery in Africa has enormous implications for understanding the history of the African diaspora, both in the Americas and everywhere else. Any focus of slavery that privileges the Atlantic stands accused of failure in understanding the diaspora of Africans elsewhere. It is essential to know where enslaved Africans who went to the Americas came from and what their departure meant to the history and society in Africa, just as it is for Africans who went to the lands of the Indian Ocean or the Islamic world of North Africa and the Middle East.

The first edition of *Transformations in Slavery* drew on Marxist concepts to highlight the complexity of the slavery past. The reference to “modes of production” is not archaic, I would suggest, because the intellectual debate on the various social formations that have developed historically, and how these formations were transformed, remains the central preoccupation of our

attention. The fact that there were at least as many enslaved people in Africa as there were in the Americas at any time in the past requires careful reflection. At the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War, there were probably more slaves in the Muslim states of West Africa than in the Confederacy, or indeed in Cuba and Brazil. The Sokoto Caliphate alone probably had as many slaves as the United States and continued as a major slave-owning economy and society until the crisis at the time of European occupation after 1897. The system of production and the social formation of the Sokoto Caliphate had similarities with the slave societies of the Americas and warrant comparison. We may call this comparison of “modes of production” a way to examine “modes of exploitation” that occurred on a massive and global scale. Breaking the silence about the implications of slavery in history is the aim of the Durban accord of 2002 pronouncing slavery “a crime against humanity.”

Paul E. Lovejoy
Cahuitta, January 1, 2011

Africa and Slavery

Slavery has been an important phenomenon throughout history. It has been found in many places, from classical antiquity to very recent times. Africa has been intimately connected with this history, both as a major source of slaves for ancient civilizations, the Islamic world, India, and the Americas, and as one of the principal areas where slavery was common. Indeed, in Africa slavery lasted well into the twentieth century – notably longer than in the Americas. Such antiquity and persistence require explanation, both to understand the historical development of slavery in Africa in its own right and to evaluate the relative importance of the slave trade to this development. Broadly speaking, slavery expanded in at least three stages – 1350 to 1600, 1600 to 1800, and 1800 to 1900 – by which time slavery had become a fundamental feature of the African political economy. This expansion occurred on two levels that were linked to the external slave trade. First, slavery became more common over an increasingly greater geographical area, spreading outward from those places that participated directly in the external slave trade. Second, the role of slaves in the economy and society became more important, resulting in the transformation of the social, economic, and political order. Again, the external trade was associated with this transformation.

Slavery: A Definition

Slavery is one form of exploitation. Its special characteristics include the idea that slaves are property; that they are outsiders who are alien by origin or who are denied their heritage through judicial or other sanctions; that coercion can be used at will; that their labor power is at the complete disposal of a master; that they do not have the right to their own sexuality and, by extension, to their own reproductive capacities; and that the slave status is inherited unless provision is made to ameliorate that status.¹ These various attributes need to

be examined in greater detail to clarify the distinctions between slavery and other servile relationships.

As property, slaves are considered to be chattel, which is to say they can be bought and sold. Slaves belong to their masters who, at least theoretically, have complete power over them. Religious institutions, kinship units, and other groups in the same society do not protect slaves as legal persons, even though the fact that slaves are also human beings has sometimes been recognized. Because they are considered chattel, slaves can be treated as commodities. But slaves seldom have been merely commodities, and often restrictions have been placed on the sale of slaves once some degree of acculturation has taken place. These restrictions could be purely moral, as they were in the Americas, where, at least in theory, it was thought wrong to divide families when sales were taking place, although in fact slave owners did whatever they wanted. In other situations, restrictions were actually enforced, or persons were automatically granted some degree of emancipation that precluded sale. In Islamic practice and under Islamic law, women taken as concubines could not be legally sold once they had given birth to children by their master. Furthermore, such children were technically free and usually recognized as such. The women became legally free on the death of their master in many cases, and in some they were nominally free as soon as they gave birth, although they could not normally terminate their status as concubines. In reality, they attained an intermediate position between slaves and free. Other restrictions on sale limited the ability of masters to sell the children of slaves, either because of religious sentiments, in the case of Islam, or because an acceptable kinship or ethnic status had been confirmed. If a sale did take place, it was carefully justified in terms of criminal activity, sorcery, or some other ideologically acceptable reason; often these same reasons could result in the sale of freeborn members of the same society. Nonetheless, it is characteristic of slavery that the slave is considered property of another person or some corporate group, despite restrictions on the nature of this property relationship that developed in actual situations.

A digression is necessary to establish what is meant by "freedom." The term is really relative. People are either more or less free to make decisions for themselves. All societies place numerous constraints on individuals, but even when this is recognized, we can still understand slaves as people who are particularly unfree. In the context of slave societies, freedom involved a recognized status in a caste, a ruling class, a kinship group, or some such corporate body. Such identification included a bundle of rights and obligations that varied considerably with the situation but were still distinct from those for slaves, who technically had no rights, only obligations. The act of emancipation, when it existed, conveyed recognition that slave and free were not the same. Emancipation dramatically demonstrated that power was in the hands of the free, not the slaves.

Therefore, slavery was fundamentally a means of denying outsiders the rights and privileges of a particular society so that they could be exploited for

economic, political, and/or social purposes.² Usually outsiders were perceived as ethnically different: The absence of kinship was a particularly common distinction. A person who spoke the same language as his master, without an accent, who shared the same culture, believed in the same religion, and understood the political relationships that determined how power was exercised was far more difficult to control than an outsider. When differences in culture or dialect have been relatively unimportant, the level of exploitation and the social isolation of slaves have usually been limited; such situations suggest small slave holdings and minimal political and economic stratification. Certainly the most developed forms of slavery have been those where slaves were removed a considerable distance from their birthplace, thereby emphasizing their alien origins. This uprooting has been as dramatic as the transport of Africans across the Atlantic or the Sahara Desert or as nondramatic as the seizure of people who lived only a hundred kilometers or less from the home of the enslavers. Both situations helped define the slave as an outsider, at least in the first instance. Over time, cultural distinctions tended to blur, so that the extent to which alien origin was a factor has varied.

When social structures and economies were more complex, the identification of slaves as outsiders also became more pronounced, so that the acculturation that invariably occurred did not affect the ability of masters to exploit the labor and services of their slaves. For Muslims, religion has been a means of categorizing slaves. Those recently acquired were usually not Muslims, or were only nominally so. Even when slaves began to practise Islam, they were usually considered less devout. For Europeans, slaves were perceived as racially distinct; despite acculturation, slaves were even more clearly defined as outsiders, thereby guaranteeing that the acquisition of rights in European society would be severely limited. Other, more subtle distinctions were made, including differences in dialect, the accent of people who had just learned a new language, facial and body markings, perceived physical characteristics, and, most common of all, memory.

Slavery virtually always has been initiated through violence that reduced the status of a person from a condition of freedom and citizenship to a condition of slavery.³ The most common type of violence has been warfare, in which prisoners were enslaved. Variations in the organization of such violence – including raids for the purposes of banditry, kidnapping, and acquisition of slaves – indicate that violent enslavement can be thought of as ranging from large-scale political action, in which enslavement may be only a by-product of war and not its cause, to small-scale criminal activity, in which enslavement is the sole purpose of the action. Taken together, warfare, slave raiding, and kidnapping have accounted for the vast majority of new slaves in history. Even when the motives for war were not to acquire slaves, the link between war and slavery was often strong. In societies where it was customary to enslave prisoners, the belligerents invariably took account of the possibilities of defraying the cost of war through the sale or use of slaves. When wars and raids were chronic, these

resulted in the continuous enslavement or reenslavement of people, and the incidence of slavery in such situations increased.

Whereas warfare and similar violence accounted for most of the newly enslaved people in history, judicial and religious proceedings accounted for some as well. Slavery was a form of judicial punishment, particularly for such crimes as murder, theft, adultery, and sorcery. The methods by which suspected criminals were enslaved have varied greatly, but often they were sold out of their home communities. This avenue of enslavement once again was rooted in violence, however legitimate in the eyes of the society in question. The status of a person was radically reduced: The new slave could lose his membership in the community, and his punishment could confirm a status that was passed on to his or her descendants.

There have been instances of voluntary enslavement, particularly when the threat of starvation left the person with no other recourse. This is not a case of conscious violence by society or an enemy. There may well have been structural causes in the past that placed people in situations where they could not be assured of survival and hence found it necessary to enslave themselves. This structural dimension may well have carried with it a dimension that was ultimately exploitative and violent. Nonetheless, voluntary enslavement was unusual, and it probably accounted for only a small percentage of slaves in most places. Furthermore, the possibility of voluntary enslavement depended on the existence of an institution of slavery in which violence was fundamental. If there were no such institution, a person would not become a slave but a client or some other dependent. That the status of slave was even assigned in such instances indicates that other servile statuses were not appropriate, either because they were lacking or because they were defined to exclude such cases.

The extent of coercion involved in slavery is sometimes obvious and sometimes disguised. The master can enforce his will because of his ability to punish slaves for failure to comply with his orders or to perform their tasks satisfactorily. Whipping, confinement, deprivation of food, additional hard work, and the ability to dispose of slaves through sale were common means of coercion. Physical punishment could lead to death, and even when there were legal and customary prohibitions on killing slaves, these were rarely enforceable. Often coercion was more indirect. The example of other slaves being punished or sold and the knowledge that the master could do so were usually sufficient to maintain slave discipline. Sacrifices of slaves at funerals and public ceremonies, which were common in some places, were also examples to the slaves. Such public displays were not usually a form of punishment for insubordination; in fact, they were sometimes conceived of as an honor, but most often slaves were purchased specifically for sacrifice. Because insubordination could lead to sale, the risks for the slave were obvious. A purchaser might well be in need of a sacrificial victim.

Slavery is fundamentally tied to labor. It has not been the only form of dependent labor, but slaves could be made to perform any task in the economy.

They had to do what they were told, hence they often performed the most menial and laborious tasks and sometimes undertook great risks. In the case of slaves, the concept of labor has not usually been perceived as separate from the slave as a person. The slave was considered an instrument of work, and coercion could be used to force compliance with particular orders. The slave was told what to do and, if he or she did not do it, he or she was punished, often severely. Slavery could and did exist alongside other types of labor, including serfdom (in which people were tied to the land, and their obligations to the lord were fixed by custom), clientage (voluntary subordination without fixed remuneration for services), wage labor (in which compensation for work was monetized), pawnship (in which labor was perceived as interest on a debt and the pawn as collateral for the debt), and communal work (often based on kinship or age grades, in which work was perceived as a reciprocal activity based on past or future exchange). These other forms of labor could involve coercion, too, but usually not to the point at which they could be called slavery.

A peculiar feature of slavery was this absolute lack of choice on the part of slaves. Their total subordination to the whims of their master meant that slaves could be assigned any task in the society or economy. Hence slaves have not only performed the most menial and laborious jobs, but they have also held positions of authority and have had access to considerable wealth. The plantation field hand and the slave general had their subordination to their master in common. Both were assigned a task, but the nature of their employment was so different that they had virtually no mutual interests. The identity of the slave was through his master. Legally, the master was held responsible for the actions of the slave, and this was the same for administrative slaves as well as common laborers. Therefore, slaves did not necessarily constitute a class. Their dependence could result in the subordination of their identity to that of their master, on whom their position depended, or it could lead to the development of a sense of comradeship with other slaves, and hence form the basis for class consciousness. Both could take place in the same society if slaves and others recognized a clear distinction between those engaged in production and those involved in the military and administration.

Because slaves had to be fully subservient, their masters controlled their sexual and reproductive capacities as well as their productive capacities.⁴ When slaves constituted a significant proportion of any population, sexual access and reproduction were strongly controlled. Women (and men, too) could be treated as sexual objects; the ability to marry could be closely administered; and males could be castrated. The significance of sex is most strikingly revealed in the market price of slaves. Eunuchs were often the most costly, with pretty women and girls close behind, their price depending on their sexual attractiveness. These two opposites – castrated males and attractive females – demonstrate most clearly the aspect of slavery that involved the master's power over the slave's sexual and reproductive functions. Slaves lacked the right to engage in sexual relationships without the consent of their master. They could not marry

without the master's permission and provision of a spouse. Their children, once slaves were given permission to have children, were not legally their offspring but the property of their master, often the master of the mother. Biologically, they were the offspring of the slaves, but the right to raise the children could be denied. Instead, slave children could be taken away and, even when they were not sold, redistributed as part of marriage arrangements, trained for the army or administration, or adopted by the master's family.

Masters had the right of sexual access to slave women, who became concubines or wives, depending on the society. This sexual dimension is a major reason why the price of female slaves has often been higher than the price of men. Male slaves could be denied access to women, and this dimension of slavery was a vital form of exploitation and control. The ability to acquire a spouse depended on the willingness to accept slave status and to work hard. Marriage or other sexual unions were a method of rewarding men. The desires of women were seldom taken into consideration. Although men could be given a wife from among the reduced pool of females available for such unions, they were not usually allowed effective paternity over their offspring. Actual bonds of affection and recognized biological links existed, of course, but these could be disrupted through the removal of the children if the master so wished. The master could reward the male slave, or he could deprive males of their sexuality through castration.

The slave status was inherited. This meant that the property element, the feature of being an alien, and the form of labor mobilization continued into the next generation, although in practice the slave status was often modified. The condition of slaves changed from the initial instance of enslavement through the course of the slave's life, and such an evolution continued into the next generation and beyond. The changed status varied from society to society, being more pronounced in some places than in others. In the past, the theory of the slave as an outsider became more difficult to uphold once a slave began to understand and accept his master's culture. Even though the theory could still define the slave as an alien, slaves were usually provided with the essentials of life, including access to land, spouses, protection, religious rites, and other attributes of citizenship. The more technical aspects of slavery, including the elements of property, labor, and being alien, could be invoked arbitrarily, but in practice these legal rights of the masters were usually not exercised fully. Usually some kind of accommodation was reached between masters and slaves. The sociological level of this relationship involved recognition on the part of slaves that they were dependents whose position required subservience to their master, and it necessitated an acceptance on the part of the masters that there were limits on how far their slaves could be pushed.

Those born into slavery found themselves in a different position from those who had been enslaved in their own lifetime, for the initial act of violence became an abstraction. Parents might tell their children of their enslavement, but this was not the children's experience. Children could also learn about

enslavement from new captives, and they were educated into a society in which such acts were well known. The threat of violence was also present. Legally, they often could be separated from their parents and sold, even if in practice this was rare. The same insecurity that led to the enslavement of their parents or the new slaves with whom they came in contact could result in their own reenslavement through war or raids. And if they behaved in a manner that was not acceptable, they could be sold. The violence behind the act of enslavement remained, therefore, although for the descendants of slaves it was transformed from a real act to a threat. As such, violence was still a crucial dimension of social control.

In both cases, moreover, the violence inherent in slavery affected the psychology of the slaves. The knowledge of the horrors of enslavement and the fear of arbitrary action produced in slaves both a psychology of servility and the potential for rebellion. This dual personality related to the coercion of the institution, for memory and observation served as effective methods of maintaining an atmosphere in which violence always lurked in the background. Slaves did not have to experience the whip; indeed, they were wise to avoid it.

Slaves tended not to maintain their numbers naturally, and slave populations usually had to be replenished.⁵ One reason for this situation was the relatively short life span for many slaves. Death could result from particularly harsh work; funeral sacrifices and unsuccessful castration operations also took their toll. Travel conditions for slaves destined for distant markets were also a factor, both because individuals were moved from one disease environment to another and because rations were often inadequate. Another reason was the demographic imbalance between the sexes in slave populations. The number of women in a population is a principal variable in determining whether or not a population will remain stable, expand, or contract. In conditions where the number of males was much greater, as it was among newly imported slaves in the Americas, or when there was an uneven distribution of slave women in society, as in many parts of Africa, the birthrate for slaves could be too low to maintain the slave population, or the relative fertility of women could be affected by their frequency of sexual contact. The situation for populations with an excess number of males led to the general decline in the total population, not just slaves, unless more slaves were imported. When slave women were distributed unevenly, the general population did not necessarily decline, only the proportion of slaves in the population. The women were usually taken as wives or concubines by free men, so that they still bore children, although perhaps not as often as they might have if they had been free. Because the status of concubines and slave wives changed, sometimes leading to assimilation or full emancipation, the size of the slave population decreased accordingly. The children of slave wives and concubines by free fathers were often granted a status that was completely or almost free. Under Islamic law, this was most pronounced. Concubines could not be sold once they gave birth, and they became free on the death of their masters. The children of such unions were free on

birth. In other situations, custom dictated that slave wives be incorporated into society, and even when their children were not accorded the full rights and privileges of children by free mothers, custom prevented the possibility of sale or poor treatment that was meted out to the newly enslaved. These features of gradual assimilation or complete emancipation contradict the aspect of slavery that emphasized inherited status but was compatible with the master's power to manipulate sexual and reproductive functions for his own purposes.

Assimilation and emancipation accounted for the continued importance of enslavement and slave trading, the instruments that replenished the supply of slaves in society. The perpetuation of enslavement and the resulting trade reinforced the property element in slavery, but it did so unevenly. Those most recently enslaved or traded were treated the most like commodities. Those who had lived in one location for many years after their purchase or enslavement were less likely to be treated as if they were simply goods of trade. The institution as a whole was firmly embedded in a property relationship, but individual slaves experienced a modification in that relationship, until some were no longer property, or indeed slaves.

A brief postscript is necessary to consider the special case of slavery in the Americas, because the American system was a particularly heinous development. Many features of American slavery were similar to slavery in other times and places, including the relative size of the slave population, the concentration of slaves in economic units large enough to be classified as plantations, and the degree of physical violence and psychological coercion used to keep slaves in their place. Nonetheless, the American system of slavery was unique in two respects: the manipulation of race as a means of controlling the slave population, and the extent of the system's economic rationalization. In the Americas, the primary purpose of slave labor was the production of staple commodities – sugar, coffee, tobacco, rice, cotton, gold, and silver – for sale on world markets. Furthermore, many features that were common in other slave systems were absent or relatively unimportant in the Americas. These included the use of slaves in government, the existence of eunuchs, and the sacrifice of slaves at funerals and other occasions (but not the use of slaves and the descendants of slaves in the military). The similarities and differences are identified to counteract a tendency to perceive slavery as a peculiarly American institution. Individual slave systems had their own characteristics, but it is still possible to analyze the broader patterns that have distinguished slavery from other forms of exploitation.

Slavery in Social Formations

Slaves have constituted a small percentage or a substantial proportion of different populations. Whereas this demographic factor has been important, far more significant was the location of slaves in the society and economy. Slaves could be incidental to the society at large because they were so few in number, but

even when there were many slaves, they could be distributed relatively evenly through society or concentrated in the hands of relatively few masters. Their function could be essentially social, political, or economic, or it could be some combination of these. Slaves could be used extensively in the army and administration (political); they could be found in domestic and sexual roles (social); or they could be involved in production (economic). Often, some slaves in society performed one or another of these functions, although sometimes they were concentrated more in one category than another. Almost always slaves were found in domestic service, but if the social location of slaves was confined almost exclusively to domestic and sexual exploitation, then other forms of labor were necessarily essential to productive activities and hence to the nature of economic organization. Even when slaves filled political functions but were not engaged in productive activities, the basic structure of the economy had to rely on other forms of labor, and hence the society was not based on slavery.

Slavery as a minor feature of society must be distinguished from slavery as an institution. In those places where a few people owned a few slaves, perhaps as conspicuous examples of wealth but not as workers, slavery was incidental to the structure of society and the functioning of the economy. Slavery became important when slaves were used extensively in production, the reinforcement of political power, or domestic servitude (including sexual services). These situations required a regular supply of slaves, either through trade or enslavement, or both, while the number of slaves in society could become significant enough to affect its organization. When slavery became an essential component of production, the institution acquired additional characteristics. M. I. Finley has stated the importance of this development most aptly:

Slavery, then, is transformed as an institution when slaves play an essential role in the economy. Historically that has meant, in the first instance, their role in agriculture. Slavery has been accommodated to the large estate under radically different conditions ... and often existed alongside widespread free small holdings. That both slaves and free men did identical work was irrelevant; what mattered was the condition of work, or rather, on whose behalf and under what (and whose) controls it was carried on. In slave societies hired labor was rare and slave labor the rule whenever an enterprise was too big for a family to conduct unaided. That rule extended from agriculture to manufacture and mining, and sometimes even to commerce and finance.⁶

In Africa, slavery underwent such a transformation at different times and at varying rates in the northern savannah, the west-central regions of Angola and the Congo basin, and other places.

The transformation of slavery from a marginal feature in society to a central institution resulted in the consolidation of a *mode of production* based on slavery. Mode of production is used here to emphasize the relationship between social organization and the productive process on the one hand and the means by which this relationship is maintained on the other hand.⁷ The concept isolates the social relations of production, that is, the organization of

the productive population in terms of its own identity and the ways in which this population is managed. This interaction between the social and economic relations of production requires conditions specific to each mode of production, which allow for the regeneration of the productive process; otherwise there is no historical continuity, only an instance of production. Finally, the relationship between the productive process and its regeneration is reflected in the ideological and political structures of society – sometimes called the superstructure – as a means of distinguishing these features from the materialist base.⁸

A *slave mode of production* existed when the social and economic structure of a particular society included an integrated system of enslavement, slave trade, and the domestic use of slaves. Slaves had to be employed in production, and hence the kind of transformation identified by Finley must have occurred. This transformation usually meant that slaves were used in agriculture and/or mining but also could refer to their use in transport as porters, stock boys, and paddlers in canoes. Slaves could still fill other functions, including concubinage, adoption into kin groups, and sacrifice, but these social and religious functions had to be secondary to productive uses. Furthermore, the maintenance of the slave population had to be guaranteed. This regeneration could occur through the birth of children into slavery (inheritance of slave status), raids, war, kidnapping, and other acts of enslavement, as well as the distribution of slaves through trade and tribute. Given that slave populations were seldom self-sustaining through natural reproduction, enslavement and trade were usually prerequisites for the consolidation of a slave mode of production.

Slavery did not have to be the main feature of social relations in a society for a slave mode of production to exist. Other institutions could also determine the relations of production under different circumstances (kinship, pawnship, etc.). When slavery prevailed in one or more sectors of the economy, the social formation – that is, the combined social and economic structures of production – included a slave mode of production, no matter what other modes coexisted (feudalism, capitalism, etc.). This incorporation of various economic and social structures into a single system through the combination of, and interaction between, different modes of production could occur within the context of a single state or a wider region.⁹ Such social formations could include peasants who, for example, were either involved in a tributary relationship with a state, or were autonomous and subject to raids by the state. The ways in which such different systems were integrated – often called their “articulation” – could be quite complex. Slavery could be linked to other modes of production through long-distance trade, tributary relationships, or raids and warfare. When the structural interaction between enslavement, trade, and domestic employment of slaves was the most important part of a social formation, it can be said that the slave mode of production was dominant. This occurred when the principal enslavers and slave merchants comprised a class of slave masters who owned a substantial number of slaves and relied on them for the maintenance of their

economic and political domination. In this case, slavery became essential to the reproduction of the social formation.

The emphasis on the integration of a productive system based on slavery with the means of replenishing the supply of slaves has significance in the reconstruction of the history of slavery in its African context. This framework highlights three historical situations that were partially related and partially autonomous. Firstly, it provides a perspective for analyzing the interaction between Africa and the demand for slaves in the Islamic world of North Africa and the Middle East. Secondly, it emphasizes the connection between Africa and the Americas, where African slaves were essential to plantation production and the mining sector. Thirdly, it allows for a study of the widespread productive use of slaves in Africa, particularly in the nineteenth century after the external slave trade across the Atlantic collapsed. In all three situations, a mode of production based on slavery developed, but specific characteristics differed. The framework adopted here – the distinction between slavery as a marginal feature of society, slavery as an institution, and slavery as a mode of production – is meant to facilitate a study of these three different situations.

The debate in the theoretical literature between Marxists and non-Marxists and among Marxists themselves has inspired this conceptual framework, but there are clear differences in my use of “mode of production” and “social formation” and their use by other scholars. I disagree emphatically with the approach of Samir Amin, Barry Hindess, Paul Q. Hirst, and others who employ a framework drawn from the interpretation of Louis Althusser, because, as these scholars readily admit, their analysis depends on ideal constructs that are ahistorical.¹⁰ Rather, I follow the less dogmatic formulation of Emmanuel Terray, whose purpose is to provide an “instrument of analysis,” which I assume means an “instrument of *historical* analysis.”¹¹ From this perspective, a “slave mode of production” is meant to be a descriptive term whose theoretical significance is not developed here. My purpose is to isolate the place of slaves in production as a first step in historical reconstruction.

The African Setting

Africa was relatively isolated in ancient and medieval times. Before the middle of the fifteenth century, virtually the only contact was along the East African coast, across the Red Sea, and via the Sahara Desert. Those places bordering these frontiers were different from more isolated regions further inland. There were exceptions, depending on natural resources, especially gold, so that five areas of gold production were drawn into the orbit of the non-African world: three in West Africa (Buré, Bambuhu, Volta basin), Ethiopia, and the Shona plateau in the interior of the Zambezi valley. In addition, there was internal trade in luxuries other than gold – kola nuts between the West African forests west of the Volta River and the savanna to the north; copper, which was traded south from the Sahara into the lower Niger valley, and which was also

distributed outward from the southern parts of modern Congo; salt from many sources, including numerous sites in the Sahara Desert, the Red Sea coast of Ethiopia, local centers in the interior of Angola, many places along the Guinea coast, and other sites near the Great Lakes of east-central Africa. Despite its probable antiquity, this regional trade was relatively autonomous from the external sector.

Furthermore, the other major economic developments during the millennium before the fifteenth century were also relatively isolated. The movement of Bantu-speaking farmers throughout central, eastern, and southern Africa, the emergence of pastoral nomadism as a speciality in the northern savanna and down the lake corridor of East Africa, and the spread of iron working and craft production, despite occasional links to the external world as in the case of cotton textiles, were far more influential regionally than between continents.

One characteristic of regional development was a social structure based on ethnicity and kinship. Although the antiquity of kin-based societies is not known, linguistic, cultural, and economic evidence indicates that such structures were very old. The earliest references to kinship, for example, reveal that matrilineal and patrilineal distinctions were already well formed by the early sixteenth century. Much of the West African coastal region was patrilineal, except for the Akan of the Gold Coast. In west-central Africa, people followed matrilineal customs, as their descendants do today. Such continuity, which, broadly speaking, also matches ethnic distinctions, suggests that the interior peoples who were beyond the observations of early observers shared these structures. Thus, the coastal evidence for west-central Africa indicates the probable existence of a matrilineal belt of societies stretching across the continent to the Indian Ocean, just as it does today. Nothing in the historical record indicates that this pattern changed abruptly at any time in the past.¹²

Those societies based on kinship have variously been described as ones characterized by a “lineage” or “domestic” mode of production.¹³ This mode of production had the following features: age and sexual distinctions were fundamental divisions in society, there being no class antagonisms. Elders controlled the means of production and access to women, and hence political power was based on gerontocracy. Given that women were often the principal agricultural workers in this type of social formation, production and reproduction were closely associated.¹⁴ The maintenance of society depended on the fertility of the women and the output of their labor. The crucial variables for gerontocratic domination included the number of women married to elders, the number of children born to each wife, the ability to secure cooperation from junior kin and affines, and access to the nonhuman resources of the lineage, including land, trees, wild products, game, and water. In this situation, slavery did not alter the essential basis of the social formation. Slaves could add to the size of the population and thereby increase the number of people mobilized by the elders, but slaves performed virtually the same functions as lineage members.

Slavery was one of many types of dependency, and it was an effective means of controlling people in situations where kinship remained paramount. Slaves lacked ties into the kinship network and only had those rights that were granted on sufferance. There was no class of slaves. Although slaves undoubtedly performed many economic functions, their presence was related to the desire of people, either individually or in small groups of related kin, to bypass the customary relationships of society to increase their influence. Slavery was, therefore, essentially a social institution in small-scale societies where political influence depended on the size of social groups. If they were allowed to do so, slaves could become full members of these groups, or they could be kept as voiceless dependents, but their welfare was related to the fortunes of their master and his kin. In this setting, people had slaves along with other types of dependents, but society was not organized in such a manner that slavery was a central institution. These were not slave societies.¹⁵

Beside slavery, there were other categories of dependency, including pawnship, in which persons were held for security for debts, and junior age-sets, in which younger kin were not yet allowed to participate fully in the decisions of the lineage. Even marriage and concubinage were institutions of dependency. Dependents were mobilized in the interests of the lineage as determined by the male elders. They performed cooperative work in the fields, formed hunting expeditions, defended villages against aggression, and participated in religious ceremonies. Because land was often held in common and because marriage involved payments that were too large for most youths to finance on their own, ties of kinship were strong. In times of difficulty, these connections provided insurance. Junior kin, in particular, were most vulnerable. On the one hand, they needed the family because they often were not wealthy enough or old enough to be on their own. On the other hand, they were the first to suffer in troubled times.

As pawnship demonstrates, ties other than those based on kinship were important because they supplemented or bypassed genetic connections.¹⁶ As individuals held as security for a debt, pawns had kin connections, but not usually with the creditor. Hence their value was based on the expectation that their relatives would repay the debt and thereby release the pawn from bondage. Pawns could be used in this capacity because they were directly related to the debtor. Children were usually the ones forced into pawnship, and while they stayed with a creditor their labor was his. They were redeemed when the debt was settled. Because their family was known, pawns were not usually mistreated. Legally, they could not be sold. They were a pledge, and they expected their term of servitude to be brief. For the creditor, pawns were an investment. Here was an additional dependent, not related by kinship, who could be called on to perform a variety of beneficial functions. There was little to lose. If the pawn should die, another had to be provided, as long as there had been no serious mistreatment.

In all societies, a man could have control over many women, including slaves, pawns, and free.¹⁷ Marrying a free woman required payments to her family, and hence a father with some wealth and authority could augment his position through the arrangement of good marriages for his daughters or nieces, depending on patrilineal or matrilineal customs. Furthermore, a man could marry pawns and slaves and thereby avoid bride-wealth payments. In marrying a pawn, the debt was cancelled, and usually there were no obligations to the pawn's family. The cost of marrying a slave was the initial purchase price and, considering that her family was seldom known, the woman was completely dependent on her husband. These unions with pawns and slaves were seldom the most preferred marriages; contracts between cousins were often the most desired unions because such marriages were between free people and strengthened kinship ties. Nonetheless, once a respectable marriage was established, a man could then seek additional wives who were pawns or slaves.

These marital practices explain why servile women were in great demand. The nature of such relationships promoted assimilation, not segregation. Women became part of the family. Those whom the master did not marry or take as concubines were given to his male dependents – sons, nephews, loyal followers. In all these cases, female slaves effectively became free dependents, especially after they bore children by a free man. By contrast, the slave wives of male slaves retained their servile status. In these situations there was usually no act of emancipation, nor could there be because kin ties were determined by birth. Full incorporation into a lineage, which corresponded to emancipation, came gradually, depending on the degree of acculturation, marriage to full lineage members, and individual expressions of loyalty. In the absence of articulated classes, the slave status evolved in a manner similar to the changes in other social categories. Young people eventually became elders; slaves or their descendants gradually became members of the lineage.

Because many domestic slaves were women or girls, these observations on marital customs help explain this evolution toward full assimilation. Women and slaves born in the family were easily assimilated, and the sale of such individuals was rare. Those taken as slaves when they were children also were seldom sold. These slaves were treated very much as members of the household. Their tasks may have been more menial, but they were often granted responsibilities in trade, craft production, or other occupations. Second-generation slaves could fare as well or better.

The emphasis on dependency could be reflected in religious practices; sacrifices, for example, were interpreted as an expression of continuity between this world and the next and the need for dependents in both. The killing of slaves and the quest for outsiders – or their heads – also emphasized dependency through the symbolism attached to such acts. These had no productive function but were indicators of social and economic standing. The demand for victims to be killed at funerals, religious rites, and political ceremonies could be haphazard and hence occasional, or it could become regularized and hence

institutionalized. Funeral sites at Igbo-Ukwu suggest that the ninth-century ancestors of the Igbo had already developed a demand for sacrificial victims that could be supplied through the institution of slavery.¹⁸ Archaeology cannot determine the social status of those buried along with nobles – they could be free wives, children, volunteers, or others. At some point in time, nonetheless, slaves did become the main source for such victims.

The Islamic Factor

The existence of slaves in societies that emphasized kinship and dependency permitted their integration into a vast network of international slavery. This integration probably stretched far back into the past, but only for those areas closest to the Mediterranean basin, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. By the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, the Islamic world had become the heir to this long tradition of slavery, continuing the pattern of incorporating black slaves from Africa into the societies north of the Sahara and along the shores of the Indian Ocean. The Muslim states of this period interpreted the ancient tradition of slavery in accordance with their new religion, but many uses for slaves were the same as before – slaves were used in the military, administration, and domestic service. The names of titles, the treatment of concubines, and other specifics of slavery were modified, but the function of slaves in politics and society was largely the same. Despite the ancient tradition, the principal concern here is with the consolidation of slavery in its Islamic context; for more than seven hundred years before 1450, the Islamic world was virtually the only external influence on the political economy of Africa.¹⁹

Initially slaves were prisoners captured in the holy wars that spread Islam from Arabia across North Africa and throughout the region of the Persian Gulf. Enslavement was justified on the basis of religion, and those who were not Muslims were legally enslaveable. After the early caliphates were established, slaves came largely from frontier areas where holy war was still being waged. Hence an early division was established between the central Islamic lands and the frontier, and a degree of specialization entered into this system of slavery. The central provinces of Islam provided the market for slaves; the supplies came from the frontier regions. Slaves were not necessarily black, although black slaves always constituted a significant proportion of the slave population. They came as well from western Europe and from the steppes of southern Russia. They were often prisoners of war, non-Muslims who had resisted the expansion of Islam. Slavery was conceived of as a form of religious apprenticeship for pagans. Early on, resident Jews and Christians were given special status as “people of the book,” recognized as free men subject to special taxes and limitations on civil liberties but exempt from enslavement. Some Christians were enslaved during war, especially in western Europe, but most slaves came from elsewhere.

The nature of the demand for slaves reveals some important features of the trade. Women and children were wanted in greater numbers than men. They were also more likely to be incorporated into Muslim society. Boys, either eunuch or virile, were trained for military or domestic service, and some of the more promising ones were promoted. Females also became domestics, and the prettiest ones were placed in harems, a factor that strongly influenced slave prices. Adult males and the least attractive women were destined for the more menial and laborious tasks, and their numbers had to be constantly replenished through new imports. This slavery was not a self-perpetuating institution, and those born into slavery formed a relatively small proportion of the slave population. Most children of slaves were assimilated into Muslim society, only to be replaced by new imports. Emancipation, concubinage, domestic servitude, political appointment, and military position also militated against the establishment of a slave class with a distinct class consciousness. Race, too, was minimized as a factor in the maintenance of servile status.

The religious requirement that new slaves be pagans and the need for continued imports to maintain the slave population made Africa an important source of slaves for the Islamic world. Since sub-Saharan Africa was initially beyond the lands of Islam, Muslim and other merchants looked to Africa for slaves. Local warfare, convicted criminals, kidnapping, and probably debt were sources of slaves for visiting merchants, who individually gathered slaves in small lots for shipment by boat across the Red Sea or up the East African coast, or joined together to form caravans for the march across the Sahara. The export trade was relatively modest for many centuries before the fifteenth century and indeed did not really expand considerably until the nineteenth century. Exports amounted to a few thousand slaves per year at most times, and because the affected areas were often very extensive, the overall impact was usually minimized, except for those enslaved.

In the Islamic tradition, slavery was perceived as a means of converting non-Muslims. One task of the master, therefore, was religious instruction, and theoretically Muslims could not be enslaved, although this was often violated in practice. Conversion did not automatically lead to emancipation, but assimilation into the society of the master as judged by religious observance was deemed a prerequisite for emancipation and was normally some guarantee of better treatment. One aspect of the religious and related legal tradition was that emancipation as the act of freeing slaves and thereby changing their status was clearly defined. In societies based on kinship, emancipation was a process that was recognized through progressive integration of successive generations through marriage until people fully belonged to the group. There was often no act of emancipation as such. In Islamic practice, there was.

The functions performed by slaves were also different, in part because the structures of Islamic societies were often on a larger scale than among kinship groups. In the large Islamic states of the Mediterranean basin, for example, slaves were used in government and the military, occupations that did not exist

in stateless societies. Slave officials and soldiers often proved loyal because of the dependency on their master for status. Eunuchs comprised a special category of slavery that does not seem to have been characteristic of most non-Muslim societies based on kinship. Eunuchs, who could be used in administrative positions and as overseers of harems, were especially dependent, without even the chance of establishing interests that were independent of their master. Under the influence of Islam, this practice spread into sub-Saharan Africa, along with the employment of slaves in the army and bureaucracy.

The Islamic view of slave women was also different from societies based only on kinship. Islamic law limited the number of wives to four, although only material considerations and personal whim limited the number of concubines. In both Islamic and non-Islamic situations, men could have as many women as they could afford, but the legal setting was different. Islamic custom, again emphasizing a clearer line between slave and free, allowed for the emancipation of concubines who bore children by the master. Legally, they became free upon the death of the master, but they could not be sold once they gave birth. In practice, the wives of slave origin in societies based on kinship were seldom sold either, and their status was closer to that of becoming a member of the kin group, and hence free. The terms of reference differed, but the practice was quite similar.

In many Islamic societies, slaves also performed tasks that were more directly related to production and trade. Certainly the scale of economic activity in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean basins involved greater exchange, a higher level of technological development, and the possibilities of more specialized exploitation of slave labor than in most of Africa until recent times. In fact, slaves were frequently assigned tasks that were not directly productive but instead supported a political and social hierarchy that exploited a population of free peasants, craftsmen, and servile populations that were not slave. Although slaves were most often used for domestic (including sexual) purposes, or in government and the military, occasionally they were employed in production, such as in the salt mines of Arabia, Persia, and the northern Sahara. Other slaves were employed in large-scale agricultural enterprises and craft manufacturing. The frequency and scale of this labor, even though it was not the major form of production, was something quite different from the use of slaves in the less specialized economies of those African societies based almost entirely on kinship.

These different uses for slaves, the more clearly defined distinction between slave and free, and the occasional employment of slaves in productive activities demonstrate a sharp distinction between the slavery of kin-based societies and the slavery of Islamic law and tradition. The most important difference was that slavery in Islamic lands had experienced a partial transformation of the kind that Finley identifies as significant in the institutionalization of slavery. A fully economic system based on slave labor had not taken place in most parts of the Islamic world between 700 and 1400, despite the importance of

administrative and military slaves in the maintenance of Islamic society. Slave concubines and domestic slaves were common and indeed affected the nature of marriage as an institution and the organization of wealthy households. The adaptation of similar practices in sub-Saharan Africa involved a parallel transformation there.

The Trans-Atlantic Trade

The rise and expansion of the European slave trade across the Atlantic Ocean had a decided impact on the evolution of slavery in Africa, particularly in those areas along the Guinea coast where the influence of Islam had been weak or nonexistent.²⁰ Whereas the demand for slaves in the non-African parts of the Islamic world had a relatively gradual but steady influence on the spread of Islamic ideas and practices through parts of Africa, the impact of the European market for slaves was more intense over a much shorter period, with a correspondingly different influence. Slave exports rose gradually during the first 150 years of the Atlantic trade. Thereafter, the trade was truly large, on a scale that dwarfed all previous exports from Africa. The total volume for the Atlantic trade surpassed 12.8 million people, a figure derived largely from the records of slaving voyages compiled by David Eltis and his associates (see Table 1.1), which supersedes the pioneering census of Philip D. Curtin.²¹ The pull of the market had the effect of pushing indigenous forms of slavery further away from a social framework in which slavery was another form of dependency in societies based on kinship relationships, to a system in which slaves played an increasingly important role in the economy. In short, this change also involved a transformation similar to the one that Finley has characterized as a fundamental shift in the way slavery can be embedded in a social formation.

The opening of the Atlantic to trade marked a radical break in the history of Africa, more especially because that trade involved the departure of millions of people, perhaps as many as 12.8 million from the late fifteenth century until c.1867. Before this forced migration, the Atlantic shores of Africa had been virtually isolated from the outside world. Some salt and fish were traded into the interior in exchange for food, but by and large the coastline was a barrier. The technological breakthrough of ocean shipping had a tremendous economic impact, making available new sources of wealth for local people and facilitating political change on an unprecedented scale. Slavery here was closely associated with this transformation, not only because slaves were a major export, but also because slaves became far more common in local society than previously.

The impact on the shores of Africa was widespread, with ships embarking slaves at an estimated 192 locations (Table 1.2). Almost half of all departures were concentrated at five locations, however, with Luanda being the largest single port, accounting for about 2,826,000 people – about 22.6 percent of all departures. The five largest embarkation points were Luanda, Benguela, and Cabinda in west central Africa, Ouidah in the Bight of Benin, and Bonny

TABLE 1.1. *Slave Departures from Africa: The Atlantic Trade*

Period	Number of Slaves	Percent
1450–1500	81,000	0.6
1501–1600	338,000	2.6
1601–1700	1,876,000	14.6
1701–1800	6,495,000	50.7
1801–1900	4,027,000	31.4
TOTAL	12,817,000	

Sources: David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Manolo Florentino, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>), as summarized in Tables 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 7.1, and 7.5. For the period 1450–1522, I have relied on Ivana Elbl, “The volume of the early Atlantic slave trade, 1450–1452,” *Journal of African History* 38:1 (1997), 31–75, and for the nineteenth century, I have included *libertos* and other enslaved individuals who were disguised under other labels; see Table 7.5.

TABLE 1.2. *Estimated Departures from Embarkation Points in Africa, 1501–1867*

Embarkation Points	Number of Embarkations	Percentage
Luanda	2,826,000	22.6
Ouidah	1,004,000	8.0
Benguela	764,000	6.1
Cabinda	733,000	5.9
Bonny	672,000	5.4
Malembo	549,000	4.4
Anomabu	466,000	3.7
Loango	418,000	3.3
Old Calabar	412,000	3.3
Cape Coast Castle	318,000	2.5
Mozambique	293,000	2.3
Congo River	276,000	2.2
Gambia River	258,000	2.1
Elmina	255,000	2.0
Offra	231,000	1.8
Lagos	230,000	1.8
Ambriz	206,000	1.6
Quilimane	159,000	1.3
Sierra Leone estuary	148,000	1.2
St. Louis	145,000	1.2
TOTAL	10,285,000	82.1
All 192 embarkation points	12,521,000	17.9

Source: David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 90.

in the Bight of Biafra. Together these three ports accounted for almost half of all enslaved departures from Africa (48 percent). The implications of this concentration of the traffic in relatively few places are explored in the subsequent chapters.

The transformation in slavery that accompanied the expansion of the European demand for slaves was largely independent of Muslim Africa. This relatively separate impact introduced a new force that modified slavery in ways different from the changes that had taken place as a result of the Islamic connection in the northern savanna and along the East African coast. There was no tradition of Islamic law, nor were there other features of Islamic slave practice, including concubinage, eunuchs, and political-military officials with Islamic titles. One important result of the European trade, therefore, was the consolidation of a distinctively non-Muslim form of slavery. Slavery underwent a transformation from a marginal feature of society to an important institution, but in most places slavery continued to be interpreted in the context of lineage structures, and this is here identified as 'lineage slavery'.

As an institution, lineage slavery shared the same basic features as all types of slavery: the property element, the alien identity, the role of violence, and productive and sexual exploitation. The striking difference was the remarkable absence of foreign influence on the ideological plane. There was almost no internalization of European attitudes towards slavery, as Islamic theories and practices had been adopted elsewhere. The impact of the market did effect some changes that can be traced to European influence, but this factor operated more on the economic level than in the realm of ideology. Slavery continued to be conceived in terms of kinship, even as slaves were assigned new tasks. Slaves were increasingly used in government, trade, and the military, in ways that were similar to the use of slaves in Muslim countries. The framework and titles were different, but the function was the same. The same was true in the control of women. Polygamous rules allowed men to have as many wives as they could acquire. There was no rationalization of this practice through laws governing the number of wives and the status of concubines, as there was in Islamic law. Nevertheless, the results were similar. Important men had many wives, some of whom were slaves, and this uneven distribution of women within society was an element of social control, particularly since women were often the principal agricultural workers as well as the reproducers of kin. Control of women enabled the domination of production and reproduction. This aspect of slavery had an important impact on the export trade. Europeans wanted field-hands and mine workers. They did not really care about their sex, although they perhaps had a slight preference for males. Africans wanted women and children. Therefore, the enslaved population was divided, with European merchants buying approximately two men for every woman, and sometimes even a greater proportion of men. The European trade was significantly different from the Muslim trade across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean. Muslims, too,

wanted women, not men, as is evident in the higher prices for women in the Muslim trade.

The transformation of slavery in non-Muslim areas was related to the size of the export trade and the extent to which politicians and merchants catered to that trade through enslavement and the commercialization of the economy. As the number of slaves increased and the ability to maintain a sustained supply was established, it became possible to use slaves in new ways, not just using more slaves in the same ways. These new ways were sometimes related to increasing the scale of production, including gold, agricultural goods, craft commodities, and salt. In the nineteenth century, this productive use of slaves became important in many places. Irrespective of the difference in ideology from the European plantation economy of the Americas, slavery became firmly associated with an agricultural society that was based on large concentrations of slaves. There were many places where slavery was still conceived in terms of kinship and where slavery remained marginal to the basic organization of society. None the less, the more intensive enslavement of people and the growth in the slave trade affected the institution of slavery almost everywhere.

The interaction between the indigenous setting, Islamic influence, and the European demand for slaves provided the dynamics in the development of slavery in Africa over the past millennium, but these were not always independent variables. The indigenous setting, for example, cannot be reconstructed merely by stripping away the Islamic heritage or by temporarily ignoring the European market for slaves. That slavery probably existed in Africa before the diffusion of Islam is relatively certain, although its characteristics are not. If by slaves we mean people who were kidnapped, seized in war, or condemned to be sold as a result of a crime or in compensation for a crime, then slaves there were. Structurally, however, slavery was marginal.

The influence of Islam and the European market, and indeed many other political and economic developments, has affected the course of slavery. Once such factors had an impact on particular societies, the nature of slavery changed, and the result was a different indigenous setting. In short, the history of slavery was dynamic, and the changes that took place resulted in the emergence of slave societies in places where previously there had only been a few slaves in society. That is, slavery became a central institution and not a peripheral feature. Africa could be integrated into a network of international slavery because indigenous forms of dependency allowed the transfer of people from one social group to another. When kinship links were severed, as they were in the case of slavery, then it became necessary to move people from the point of enslavement to a more distant place. The trend of this movement was toward the external slave markets, those of the Islamic world and the Americas. Slaves tended to go from the periphery to areas of more extensive economic and political development, both within Africa and outside Africa. With exception of some slaves brought from Asia to South Africa, slaves were not imported into Africa; they

were exported. To repeat the crucial dimension of the argument – the integration of Africa into an international network of slavery occurred because Africa was an area of slave supply. In Africa, therefore, there was a structural link between this ability to supply slaves for external use and the domestic employment of slaves.

The scale of this export trade demonstrates its impact. More than 12.8 million slaves left the shores of the Atlantic coast of Africa; perhaps as many more found their way to the Islamic countries of North Africa, Arabia, and India. Even though the focus here is on the history of slavery within Africa, not the fate of Africans abroad, the volume of this trade was so substantial that it reveals an essential element in the social control of slaves, and indeed other dependents, in Africa. Export was one possibility that faced slaves; domestic exploitation was another. These were closely related structurally. Slaves were usually sold if they failed to perform their duties, and sale, not only across the Atlantic but also across the Sahara Desert, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean, was a form of punishment and hence a threat that helped control the actions of slaves. The trade entailed great risks for slaves, including forced marches, poor food, exposure to disease in a condition of exhaustion and hunger, and bad treatment. Death and permanent physical damage were common, and slaves knew it through personal experience.

As a source for the external trade since time immemorial, Africa has been a reservoir where slaves were cheap and plentiful – indeed they were there for the taking. This feature, enslavement, was another dimension of slavery in Africa that strongly affected the history of the institution there. It is inaccurate to think that Africans enslaved their brothers – although this sometimes happened. Rather, Africans enslaved their enemies. This conception of who could be enslaved served the interests of the external market, and it enabled the political ascendancy of some Africans as rulers and merchants on the continent. Warfare, kidnapping, and manipulation of judicial and religious institutions account for the enslavement of most slaves, both those exported and those retained in Africa. Unlike other places where slavery was common, particularly the Americas and the central parts of the Islamic world, enslavement on a regular basis was one essential feature of slavery as an institution. Slave masters in the Americas and the major Islamic states relied on trade for most or all of their slaves, except those born into slavery. Slave owners in the Americas and the Islamic states of the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf were not usually responsible themselves for the direct enslavement of people. In Africa, the enslavers and the slave owners were often the same. Europe and the central Islamic lands looked to areas on their periphery as a source for slaves, and Africa was such a peripheral region – virtually the only one for many parts of the Americas and a major one for the Islamic countries. Slaves also moved within Africa, from areas that were more peripheral to places that were more central, but enslavement was usually a prominent feature everywhere. There was no separation in function between enslavement and slave use; these remained intricately associated.

This connection reveals a fundamental characteristic of slavery in Africa, and when fully articulated with the use of slaves in production, slavery was transformed into a distinct mode of production that integrated enslavement, the slave trade, and the exploitation of slaves. Hence, the history of slavery in Africa involved the interaction among all three components. An examination of this interaction demonstrates the emergence of a system of slavery that was basic to the political economy of many parts of the continent. This system expanded until the last decades of the nineteenth century. The process of enslavement increased; the trade grew in response to new and larger markets, and the use of slaves in Africa became more common. Related to the articulation of this system, with its structural links to other parts of the world, was the consolidation within Africa of a political and social structure that relied extensively on slavery. Production depended, in varying degrees, on slave labor. Political power relied on slave armies. External trade involved the sale of slaves, often as a major commodity.

On the Frontiers of Islam, 1400–1600

Slavery was already fundamental to the social, political, and economic order of parts of the northern savanna, Ethiopia, and the East African coast for several centuries before 1600. Enslavement was an organized activity, sanctioned by law and custom. Slaves were a principal commodity in trade, including the export sector, and slaves were important in the domestic sphere, not only as concubines, servants, soldiers, and administrators but also as common laborers. The combination of enslavement, trade, and employment of slaves in the domestic economy indicates that a slave mode of production had developed, although the scarcity of source material limits an analysis of the transformation that resulted in this situation. From 1400 to 1600, the geographical area where slavery was most important included a strip of territory along the southern borders of the Sahara Desert, the Red Sea shores, and the East African coast. For the period as a whole, slavery tended to expand; the use of slaves followed trade routes further into the interior from this narrow strip of territory, and the source of slaves for export tended to be south of the desert edge and inland from the Red Sea.

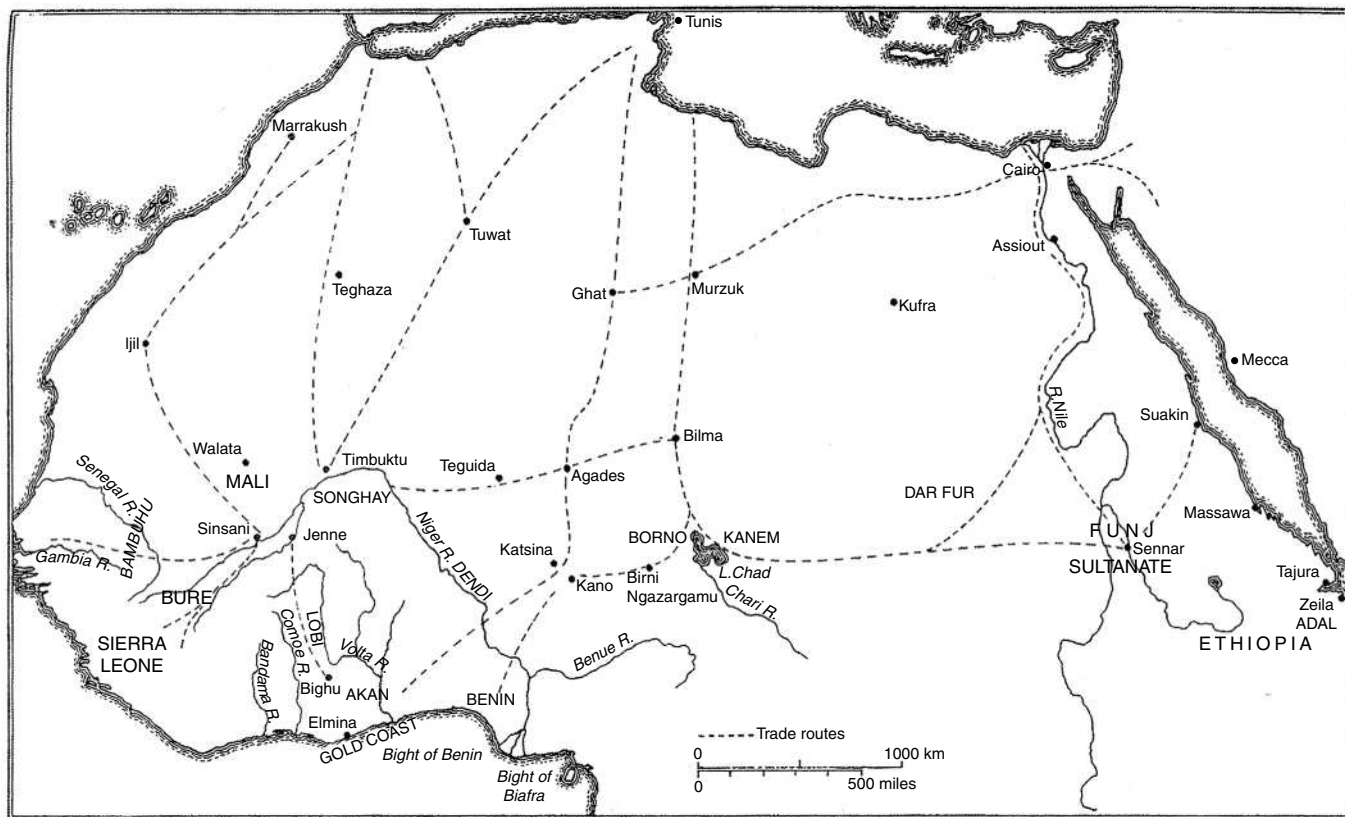
The dominant influence was Islamic, both because the major external market for slaves was North Africa and the Middle East and because Islam had become a strong influence within many of the states and societies in the northern savanna, the Ethiopian highlands, and the East African coast where slaves were used extensively. The use of slaves in these places was similar to their use elsewhere in the Muslim world, although in sub-Saharan Africa slaves were more often used in production than they were in North Africa and the Middle East. A secondary influence in this period was the introduction of European commerce into the south Atlantic basin and the Indian Ocean. This contributed to the general expansion of slavery within Africa, in part because Europeans distributed slaves between different places on the African coast and in part

because Europeans began to buy slaves on an increasingly large scale for their own use.

The Medieval Slave Trade: The African Frontier

The export trade across the Sahara Desert, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean was sustained on a level of 5,000 to 10,000 slaves per year for centuries before 1600 (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2). Ralph Austen has estimated the volume of this trade to the Islamic world – admittedly on very scanty evidence.¹ The figures cited here, 4.82 million for the Saharan trade between 650 and 1600 and 2.4 million for the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade between 800 and 1600, could be twice as many slaves as the number actually exported or considerably less than the total volume. The time span is so great and the supply area so extensive that the estimated figure (7.22 million) is a rough approximation indeed; a figure of 3.5 to 10 million is more accurate in terms of range. Nonetheless, the argument here would not be changed whether the real figure was closer to 3.5 million or 10 million; hence Austen's rough calculations are used as a convenient measure of the Islamic slave trade. This trade reflected a steady demand for slaves in the Islamic world and resulted in the maintenance of regular contact between sub-Saharan states and societies and Muslim merchants from foreign lands, who had an important influence on the spread of Islamic law and its conception of slavery. Although slave exports came from a commercial frontier that stretched thousands of kilometers along the southern edge of the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the East African coast, there were relatively few export points, and consequently the impact of the trade was more concentrated than the distance might suggest. Six major routes crossed the desert: one went north from ancient Ghana to Morocco; a second stretched north from Timbuktu to Tuwat in southern Algeria; a third passed from the Niger valley and the Hausa towns through the Air Massif to Ghat and Ghadames; a fourth traveled north from Lake Chad to Murzuk in Libya; a fifth reached north from Dar Fur in the eastern Sudan to the Nile valley at Assiout; and a sixth passed north from the confluence of the Blue Nile and the White Nile to Egypt. Some of these routes were interconnected. The ones north from Timbuktu went to Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, whereas the Dar Fur-Egypt route, known as the "forty days' road," connected with the route north from the upper Nile valley. The Red Sea ports served the Ethiopian highlands and the Nile valley and included Suakin, Massawa, Tajura, and Zeila. The East African towns comprised one route that stretched northward along the coast. In total, therefore, there were approximately nine or ten outlets for the slave trade from Africa to the Muslim world.

When the trade is broken down according to the main routes, then East Africa accounted for a traffic on the order of 1,000 slaves per year in the period from about 800 to 1600; the Red Sea ports probably handled something like



MAP 1. The Islamic Slave Trade in the Sixteenth Century.

TABLE 2.1. *Trans-Saharan Slave Trade, 650–1600*

Period	Annual Average	Estimated Total
650–800	1,000	150,000
800–900	3,000	300,000
900–1100	8,700	1,740,000
1100–1400	5,500	1,650,000
1400–1500	4,300	430,000
1500–1600	5,500	550,000
TOTAL		4,820,000

Source: Ralph Austen, "The trans-Saharan slave trade: a tentative census," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 23–76.

TABLE 2.2. *Red Sea and East African Slave Trade, 800–1600*

Red Sea Coast	East African Coast	Total
1,600,000	800,000	2,400,000

Source: Ralph Austen, "The Islamic Red Sea slave trade: an effort at quantification." In *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, pp. 443–67. Chicago, 1979.

2,000 slaves per year in the same period; and the six main routes across the Sahara averaged from 3,000 to 8,000 per year. This suggests an average volume for each route of about 1,000 per annum. The Muslim slave trade involved a steady but relatively small flow over a millennium, and despite occasionally high levels for specific points, there was not the sustained volume in slaves that characterized the Atlantic slave trade at its height. For the period before 1500, estimates are based on scattered records that suggest that some slaves were always being exported, probably in quantities of several hundred and sometimes a few thousand at a time. Perhaps a majority of these were women and children, but eunuchs were also important. Ibn Battuta, who crossed the Sahara in the middle of the fourteenth century, found that the traffic in slaves was largely confined to females and eunuchs. Indeed, Ibn Battuta traveled in one caravan of 600 female slaves.²

In the sixteenth century, slave exports from Songhay and Borno probably reached their peak. Songhay had great numbers of slaves, and the decline in gold exports probably required an increase in slave exports to make up the difference in revenue. Songhay princes amassed slaves in raids to the south.³ Borno expanded considerably in the sixteenth century and probably increased its supply of slaves to the trans-Saharan market via the Lake Chad–Murzuk route. The Borno kings continued a tradition of slave supply that had been

initiated centuries earlier when Kanem was the center of the state.⁴ This era of slave exports ended around 1600, after a final burst of activity that may have been unparalleled in earlier times. The Moroccan conquest of Songhay in 1591 witnessed a temporary increase in the scale of the trade, as thousands of captives were taken. Once the war captives were marched north, however, the trade probably settled back into the centuries-old pattern of a thousand or so per year on each route.

Slaves were also a major export from the Nile valley and the Ethiopian highlands in the sixteenth century. Muslim expansion and the reaction to Islam in both areas accounted for the volume of exports.⁵ In Ethiopia, a Muslim holy war, directed from the sultanate of Adal, temporarily overran the Christian kingdom, so that from the 1520s through the 1540s, thousands of slaves were exported across the Red Sea. Thereafter, a Christian revival checked the Muslim threat, with the result that more people were enslaved. By the end of the century, the nomadic Galla exploited the unstable political conditions of the region, and other slaves were exported. In the Nile valley, a Muslim state was established at Sennar by the Funj, and its wars of conquest, from which the earlier Christian kingdoms did not recover, resulted in the export of many slaves via the Red Sea and the desert crossings north to Egypt. The East African coast, although a source of some slaves, does not seem to have been particularly important in the sixteenth century.

The political history of those states participating in the export trade reveals that sub-Saharan Africa was not dependent on slave exports, even though revenue from the slave trade was probably a major source of income for some merchants and some rulers. The interaction between the external world and such states as Songhay, Borno, and Christian Ethiopia was on a relatively equal basis, at least until the sixteenth century. Portuguese intervention along the East African coast, the Muslim holy war in Ethiopia, and the Moroccan invasion of Songhay shifted the balance in favor of external powers temporarily, but even then the balance was restored by about 1600. The relative autonomy of sub-Saharan African states was reflected in the institution of slavery. Africa became a source of slaves, but not at the expense of its political and cultural independence. The incorporation of Islamic ideas and practices occurred gradually over many centuries in a form that was interpreted within a local context.

This autonomy meant that indigenous developments were more important than external influences in the consolidation of a mode of production based on slavery. The institutionalization of the enslavement process made it possible to export slaves and to use them domestically. Slaves were often a product of war and raiding; certainly very early in the history of the northern savanna and Ethiopia, enslavement of war prisoners became an acceptable practice. Slaves, therefore, tended to be a by-product of politically motivated military activities. The export trade may well have provided some incentive for enslavement, but localized political issues were probably more important. No matter what the relative importance of external and internal factors, both sectors were

mutually reinforcing. This is clear in the account of Cadamosto, a member of a Portuguese mission to the Senegal River in 1455–1456, who reported that the king of a small Wolof state raised revenue through “raids which resulted in many slaves from his own as well as neighbouring countries.”⁶ Cadamosto clearly did not understand the reasons why the king had reportedly attacked his own people – probably a campaign related to domestic political rivalry or rebellion, if his information was correct at all. Nonetheless, his report does indicate that the acquisition of slaves through wars and raids was common by the fifteenth century, which confirms evidence for elsewhere in the northern savanna, including Songhay, Mali, Borno, and the Hausa states.

These states shared a structural problem related to the prevalence of enslavement and slavery. Slave raiding could not be carried on indefinitely without depleting the population of the exploited societies. People were either seized or they fled, if they were unable to mount an effective resistance. War parties were forced to travel increasingly greater distances, thereby reducing their chances of successful raids. The consolidation of walled towns throughout the savanna further limited the raiding frontier, but then competing centers could attack each other in the hope of capturing slaves and depriving neighboring towns of their political independence. Both situations – the withdrawal of people from the raiding frontier and the political rivalries of states based on walled towns – were inherently unstable. Ecological factors also influenced this instability. First, those states in the northern parts of the savanna had the military advantage over states further south through access to better breeding grounds for horses, the mainstay of military superiority. Nonetheless, the northern savanna was more exposed to raids from desert nomads, whose use of camels gave them the advantage of strategic surprise. Secondly, periodic droughts affected the northern savanna severely, and when drought lasted more than a year at a stretch, many people were forced to move south. Lands that were sparsely settled were available to these migrants, who might in turn become subject to future raids, once climatic conditions returned to normal.⁷

In this cyclical pattern of history, warriors and politicians could consolidate large empires, as they did in the case of Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Borno, and Sennar. In these cases, political success pushed the raiding frontier back considerably; now rulers were concerned with establishing tributary relationships with subjugated provinces and with transforming independent farmers into tax-paying peasants and tribute-paying serfs, as well as slaves. The tendency toward political instability, slave raiding, and rivalry between neighboring towns was temporarily halted. When empires collapsed, however, these tendencies reemerged.

The Institution of Slavery in Muslim Africa

In the narrow strip of territory along the southern edge of the Sahara, the Red Sea shores, and the East African coast, the Muslim presence contributed to the

transformation of society and political structures.⁸ As the political-commercial classes converted to Islam, they adapted things and ways that were identified with Islam to the African setting. These included political titles, for example. In Mali, slave officials were appointed as early as the thirteenth century,⁹ and slaves were drafted into the army. These uses in the military and government were parallel in function to the employment of slaves in the Muslim countries of the Mediterranean and Middle East heartlands. Not only was the external trade a source of valuable imports, but it also helped spread such institutions. Muslims increasingly assumed a role in politics, education, and trade in particular. This consolidation of a Muslim society, often as islands in a sea of non-Muslims, helped structure the political economy.

In supplying slaves, African rulers found it convenient to justify enslavement from an Islamic perspective: Prisoners of war could be sold, and because captive people were considered chattels, they could be used in the same capacities as they were in the Muslim world. They could be soldiers, administrators, concubines, domestic servants, and agricultural workers. The participation of such African states as Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem, Sennar, and Adal in the slave trade occurred together with the extension of Islamic influence to sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, the Muslim merchants along the East African coast – the ancestors of the Swahili – transferred the Muslim conception of slavery into black Africa there.

Muslim attitudes toward slavery were internalized in the African context. In a letter dated 1391–1392, Borno's King Uthman ibn Idris protested to the *mamluk* regime of Egypt that Arab raiding parties were enslaving free Muslims, even members of the royal family, and selling them across the Sahara:

The Arab tribes of Jodham and others have taken our free subjects, women and children and old men of our own family and other Muslims.... These Arabs have pillaged our land, the land of Bornu, and continue doing so. They have taken as slaves free men and our fathers, the Muslims, and they are selling them to the slave-dealers of Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere, and keep some of them for themselves.... Send messengers throughout your country ... let them examine and enquire and so discover. When they have found our people, let them confront them.... If they say: "We are free men and Muslims," then believe their word and do not suspect them of lying, and when the truth is made plain to you, release them and return them to their liberty and Islam.¹⁰

Undoubtedly, Borno's ruler was indirectly seeking support in his wars with Kanem, and by casting his enemies in the role of villains, Uthman hoped to confirm his own allegiance to Islam and thereby that he was worthy of support. Indeed, Uthman argued that he was descended from a dynasty of Middle Eastern origin, which was also an attempt at establishing the legitimacy of the Borno regime. Nonetheless, the letter documents attitudes toward enslavement that became standard in the Islamic belt of Africa. Free Muslims were protected from enslavement, at least theoretically; in practice, free men were enslaved, and little could be done to protect them, despite the efforts of influential men like Uthman.

In the reign of Idris Aloma of Borno in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, one military campaign in Kanem, north-east of Lake Chad, reputedly netted 1,000 female and 2,000 male slaves, who were divided among the soldiers. Another 400 free men, seized in the campaign, were supposedly executed.¹¹ This suggests that the slave population of Kanem was substantial, although the actual numbers of slaves reported in this history cannot be accepted at face value, for the court historian, Ibn Fartua, may well have exaggerated to glorify his mentor's exploits. This report indicates that free Muslims were not supposed to be enslaved; only those already in bondage or those considered pagan were legitimate targets. For sixteenth-century Kanem, which was nominally Muslim, the free population was technically protected from enslavement, and hence Ibn Fartua apparently felt compelled to label all captives who were not executed as already being slaves. The ratio of women to men in the account is also revealing, given that more women than men were exported across the Sahara. Not only is this indirectly confirmed, but the availability of so many male slaves suggests that slavery must have been important in production.

Ahmad Bābā, an Islamic scholar from Timbuktu who lived from 1556 to 1627, wrote a book on slavery, *Mi'rāj al-Su'ūd ilā Nayl Hukm majlub al-Sūd* (1614), in which he condemned the enslavement of Muslims but otherwise accepted enslavement as a legal pursuit for Muslims.¹² After the Moroccan invasion of Songhay in 1591–1592, Ahmad Bābā was exiled to Marrakesh in Morocco, where he continued to pursue his scholarship and became famous for his relentless campaign to free Muslims who had been illegally enslaved. The collapse of Songhay was a tragic affair in the history of Islam, for both Songhay and Morocco were Muslim states, and many slaves were seized in the course of battle. Although the *Mi'raj* was an indictment of contemporary politics, Ahmad Bābā's legal interpretation was based on earlier scholarly opinions; hence the book also chronicles attitudes toward slavery over many centuries:

[T]he reason for slavery is non-belief and the Sudanese non-believers are like other *kāfir* whether they are Christians, Jews, Persians, Berbers, or any others who stick to non-belief and do not embrace Islam.... This means that there is no difference between all the *kāfir* in this respect. Whoever is captured in a condition of non-belief, it is legal to own him, whosoever he may be, but not he who was converted to Islam voluntarily, from the start, to any nation he belongs, whether it is Bornu, Kano, Songhai, Katsina, Gobir, Mali and some of Zakzak [Zazzau]. These are free Muslims, whose enslavement is not allowed in any way. Also the majority of the Fulani, except a group beyond Gao, as we have been informed, who are said to be *kāfir*.¹³

Those countries that Ahmad Bābā considered Muslim formed an almost continuous belt of territory from the headwaters of the Senegal River in the west to Lake Chad in the east. Elsewhere in his book, he condemned these savanna states because they also enslaved Muslims. Ahmad Bābā was as concerned with the illegality of local practices as with those resulting from external invasion. The difficulty facing Muslims of this period was to justify slavery in the context of political expansion and rivalry, when such actions invariably led to

abuse. Allowance had to be made for an institution that was well established and commercially profitable, and yet Muslims had to be protected. Ahmad Bābā's attempt to expose particular injustices reveals a fundamental contradiction in Muslim society that plagued thoughtful people for the next few centuries. There was no effective means of preventing abuse. Ahmad Bābā justified enslavement on religious grounds, clearly establishing a boundary between the land of Islam and the land of unbelief. This legalism is instructive of the process by which slavery spread in the savanna regions of Africa. For those who accepted a Muslim interpretation, enslavement was a legitimate activity; war was a normal relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims who did not accept their subjugation.

Slaves were not only used in the military and government, taken as concubines, and exported across the Sahara Desert; they were also employed in production. This use helps distinguish slavery in sub-Saharan Africa from slavery in the Muslim heartlands, where the productive function was not as important in the century or two before 1600. According to Cadamosto, the king of Wolof not only sold slaves to visiting merchants; he also "employs these slaves [whom he captures] in cultivating the land allotted to him."¹⁴ These slaves had no opportunity to attain the material prosperity or social standing of the favorite slaves of savanna rulers. Instead, they farmed for merchants and officials alike, producing crops under conditions that bear some resemblance to the later plantations of the Americas or to the contemporary feudal estates of Europe. The more exact comparison, in fact, is with the agricultural estates of southern Morocco and the islands of the Mediterranean, with which they were contemporary and with which they shared a common legal and religious setting.¹⁵ These plantations were a by-product of a political order based on enslavement and the export of slaves. Throughout the borderlands between the Sahara and the more fertile savanna, these agricultural slaves were settled in villages of their own, often under slave overseers. Their absentee owners, whether they were merchants traveling to distant lands for gold, salt, and other goods, or government officials busy at the capital or some remote post, exploited slave labor for their own benefit. Agricultural output, including millet and sorghum, cotton and indigo, as well as vegetables and tree crops, supplied the large commercial establishments of caravan merchants and the palaces of nobles. The surplus was sold to desert nomads who transported goods from North Africa and who brought salt from the Sahara Desert or the Ethiopian coastal lowlands. The army consumed much of this plantation output; sometimes slave soldiers even contributed to agricultural production.

By the sixteenth century, Songhay masters had settled their slaves along the Niger River, so that the Niger valley had become well populated and agriculturally productive, probably more so than at any time since then. The nature of these slave communities is open to debate. Some historians refer to them as plantations, others compare them with feudal estates. But their existence is certain.¹⁶ Gao, which in the nineteenth century was an undistinguished hamlet,

was a large city in the sixteenth century, and near it were many estates with several dozen to several hundred slaves each. By the early sixteenth century, there were plantations along the river from Jenne to Dendi at more than thirty locations. Some of these concentrations were very large; there were an estimated 1,700 to 2,700 slaves at Faran-Taka, for example. This plantation sector reached its most extensive development under Askia Daoud, between 1549 and 1583.¹⁷ These slave estates demonstrate an important feature of the slave trade; wherever slaves were exported, they were often used domestically in large numbers. As the case of Songhay so clearly shows, exports on the scale of a few thousand slaves per year could reflect the existence of a domestic slave population of considerable size, although usually it is not possible to know the exact proportion of slaves in the population.

These plantations transformed the inner Niger valley into a heavily populated and productive region.¹⁸ With the millet, sorghum, wheat, and rice that came from these irrigated fields, the Songhay administration was able to expand militarily and to maintain the empire. The river not only permitted agricultural development, but it also made possible the transport of grain upstream and downstream as needed by the state. The general movement of agricultural goods was northward from the savanna to the towns of the sahel and to the desert market. In locally bad years, grain could move both ways, of course. The river increased the political options of the state, so that control of the Niger was essential to the functioning of a well-managed economy.

Slaves were used in gold mining, at least in the western Sudan, if not also in Ethiopia and the Zambezi valley. The western Sudanese sources included Bambuhu (Bambuk), Buré, Lobi, and the Akan fields. Valentim Fernandes records a report from the Senegalese coast that dates to the first decade of the sixteenth century (c. 1507), which states:

The gold mines are seven in number. They are shared by seven kings, each of whom has his own. The mines are extremely deep down in the earth. The kings have slaves they place in the mines, and to whom they give wives they bring with them. Children are born and raised in these mines. The kings provide them as well with food and drink.¹⁹

Since gold was a major export from West Africa at this time, the role of slaves in gold production suggests that here was another sector in which slavery had become crucial to the economy.

The same applied to the use of slaves in the Tighaza saltworks in the Sahara, and perhaps elsewhere too. At Tighaza, slaves cut the rock salt into slabs for transport to the savanna markets. Conditions in these desert sites were far from pleasant: it was hot; food was monotonous; and there were few ways to escape the hard work and boredom of the bleak desert. Houses were made of salt slabs. Virtually all the food was imported, but conditions of exchange were closely regulated by the slave masters, the Mossefa Berbers, and by the Tuareg transporters. If the economics of the trade dictated against a satisfactory life at these desert saltworks, the social and political setting assured that whatever

profit was to be made would not benefit the slave workers. Slavery was not always an essential feature of the salt trade, for it was possible, as at Bilma and other desert saltworks, for free peasants to be kept in economic and political conditions of servitude that were not very different from those for slaves.²⁰ Nonetheless, slavery was one answer, and the type of slavery was far more brutal than the usual style of slavery in the middle ages, where slaves could be absorbed into domestic units. Similar conditions prevailed at the copperworks at Teguida n'tesemt.

The pattern of slavery in the Nile valley and the Ethiopian region was similar to that of the central and western Sudan. Despite the presence of Christian states as well as Muslim sultanates, the trend involved the consolidation of Islamic trade and society, and consequently Islamic patterns of slave use prevailed. Most merchants, for example, were Muslims, even in Christian Ethiopia, and hence the export trade across the Red Sea and along the Nile valley remained in Muslim hands. Slavery, too, conformed to an Islamic model that used slaves in the military, harems, agriculture, and government.²¹

The East African pattern was somewhat different from that found along the southern side of the Sahara and adjacent to the Red Sea.²² Here there were no Islamic empires or strong states actively involved in slave raiding. Instead, the coast was dotted with a string of commercial towns that relayed goods between the Zambezi valley in the south to ports in Arabia and India. Gold, ivory, and slaves came from the interior of the Zambezi valley, and some slaves were obtained locally at many points along the coast. Nonetheless, slavery here was similar to that found elsewhere in the Muslim world. Concubines, domestic servants, officials of the petty rulers of the coastal ports, and plantation slaves constituted the servile population. Plantations were concentrated at several points, including the area around Mombasa and Malindi in the north and on the north-west coast of Madagascar, opposite the mainland.

The absence of a clearly defined slave class is a significant feature of Muslim Africa during the middle ages. Exploitation was based on a class that had access to political office and commercial credit. Merchants and officials benefited from tribute, taxation, commercial profit, and the output of slaves. Despite the restrictions placed on admission to the merchant community and to high office, slavery was not a barrier. Merchants had to be Muslims, and they identified ethnically. Rulers had to have an aristocratic heritage that showed a clear ancestry. In neither case were slaves excluded. Slave women were taken as wives and concubines, and consequently their children had legitimate claims. Slaves became commercial agents, if they could prove their competence and loyalty, and they were appointed to official positions. Seldom did slave agents inherit, but they could marry the free-born once they themselves were free, and by so doing they established a claim to a legitimate ancestry.

Slave labor was important, too. Without slaves, much of the salt would have had to have been worked in other ways. A significant proportion of farm output also depended on slaves, and in most households, domestic slaves engaged in

textile production, mat and basket weaving, and other crafts. Livestock herders used slaves to dig wells, tend herds, gather firewood, and farm. These occupations were also performed by free peasants who paid tax or tribute, participated in *corvée* projects, and, if they were beyond the confines of the state or were part of a delinquent province, were subject to raiding, plunder, and enslavement. Castes like the blacksmiths and fishermen, though they owned slaves themselves, were subject to special exactions, too. Slavery was only one form of the many exploitative relationships that dominated African Islamic society in this period.

Slavery provides a key to understanding African history, however varied the relationships of exploitation were. The ultimate threat of the state was the slave raid. Raiding did not just involve enslavement; it also caused death. There was little need for the old or the very young, and many were probably killed during military campaigns. Families were divided, and because there was a greater demand for women and children, men were often executed. Even when communities survived raids, they frequently suffered the destruction of their fields and homes and lost their livestock and other moveable property. The danger of famine and crippling poverty were serious problems confronting the survivors.

For those who were enslaved, the dangers involved forced marches, inadequate food, sexual abuse, and death on the road. The Sahara crossing was the greatest risk for many slaves. The trip was so long, and food and water so carefully managed, that the slightest mishap from a raid on the caravan or an empty water hole could eliminate whole coffles of slaves. Still other captives, the prime boys, faced castration because the price for eunuchs was always very high – and no wonder the price was high, given that as many as nine out of ten died from unsuccessful operations.

The danger incumbent on enslavement, therefore, was one of the worst dimensions of slavery, for at the time of capture, the enslavers could treat their chattel however they pleased. Victims could be killed or left to face poverty and famine. They could be emasculated. They could be marched to their death, with each point of transfer bringing unknown prospects for the slave. The legitimization of enslavement, therefore, reinforced a tendency toward war and other forms of violence. Because this threat was ever present, people were placed in the dilemma of accepting some type of dependent relationship to political authority to minimize the risks of enslavement and death. The enslaved themselves were placed in positions that contributed to this cycle of oppression. They made up the armies, fed the political administration and the soldiers, and were the products of trade that benefited the powerful. Slavery infected all levels of society and economy. The threat of slave raids convinced people to pay tribute regularly, while the caste structure emphasized the distinction between slaves and free by maintaining a corporate identity for blacksmiths, minstrels, fishermen, and merchants. Despite the absence of a clearly defined class of slaves, slavery was the cement of the social formation. Slavery emphasized the

dependency that characterized all relationships, and as the ultimate punishment for those who refused to submit to a state, it held the whole range of possibilities that existed in the social order, from death to hard physical labor, to high position, to sale abroad. Slavery was the great equalizer, but it revealed the essential inequality of African society.

Origins of the Atlantic Trade: The Muslim Connection

The first Portuguese caravels edged down the Atlantic coast of Africa in the 1430s and 1440s, reaching the Senegal River by 1445.²³ In so doing, they opened another route that paralleled the trans-Saharan roads. The Portuguese were more interested in gold than slaves, although they were willing to trade in pepper, ivory, and other products. Their investment in this exploration of the African coast was a conscious effort to bypass Muslim middlemen; initially, the Portuguese only succeeded in expanding the existing trans-Saharan trade by opening the maritime route; later, they participated in coastal African trade as middlemen themselves. Structurally, therefore, both the Portuguese and the Muslim traders filled the same functions: They connected sub-Saharan Africa with the Mediterranean world and they participated in the regional commerce of West Africa.

The early slave trade of the Portuguese demonstrates this similarity to the established commercial patterns in four ways. Firstly, some slaves were taken to southern Europe for employment as domestic servants, a demand similar to that in the Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East.²⁴ Secondly, other slaves were sold to sugar planters on islands in the Mediterranean, and when sugar production spread into the Atlantic, to buyers on Madeira, the Canaries, and the Cape Verde Islands.²⁵ In both cases – domestic servitude and sugar production – the market was already satisfied to some extent by the trans-Saharan trade. Thirdly, the Portuguese bought and sold slaves along the West African coast, merely transferring slaves from one place to another so that gold could be purchased as a result of the profits realized from the transit trade.²⁶ Again, Muslim merchants in the interior of West Africa did the same thing. Finally, the link to the trans-Saharan trade is particularly evident in the commodities exported to West Africa by the Portuguese; these included textiles and other goods bought in North Africa.²⁷ Cadamosto, who participated in a Portuguese expedition to the Senegambia in 1455–1456, was well aware of this competition with the trans-Saharan trade, evident in his observation that the Wolof king “sells many [slaves] to the Azanaghi merchants in return for horses and other goods, and also to the Christians, since they have begun to trade with these blacks.”²⁸

The scale of the Portuguese slave trade along the Mauritanian, Senegambian and upper Guinea coast was about 80,000 for the second half of the fifteenth century (see Table 2.3). The 800 or so slaves bought and sold each year largely fitted into other, established commercial patterns that the Portuguese were able

TABLE 2.3. *Estimates of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1450–1600*

Period	Departures
1450–1500	81,000
1501–1550	124,000
1551–1600	213,000
TOTAL	418,000

Sources: Ivana Elbl estimates that 155,800 slaves were exported from western Africa from 1450 to 1521, including exports to Europe and the islands off the African coast; “The volume of the early Atlantic slave trade, 1450–1521,” *Journal of African History*, 38:1 (1997), 73. The *Slave Trade Database* estimate for the period 1501–1525 is 13,000, which is considerably less than Elbl’s calculations. See David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Manolo Florentino, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>). The estimates presented here accept Elbl’s figures.

to tap. In the Senegambia region, for example, the Portuguese were able to buy gold, which came from Bambuhu and Buré in the interior,²⁹ which were important sources of gold before new and larger deposits were discovered in the Americas. Another reason was that trade was well established in the Senegambia, and the particular geographical features of the region made it easy for seaborne merchants from Portugal to tap existing commerce. Both the Senegal and Gambia Rivers were navigable inland, and they crossed the routes north into the Sahara to the Mediterranean. It was possible, therefore, to divert some trade to the coast, including gold, slaves, and other goods. Major salt sources were located near the coast north of Senegal and the Gambia. Consequently, Muslim merchants were already moving goods – salt, slaves, textiles, fish, and grain – back and forth between the coast and the interior. It was easy to introduce European commodities to buy gold and slaves. This trade continued throughout the whole period of the Atlantic trade, sometimes amounting to a few thousand slaves per year.

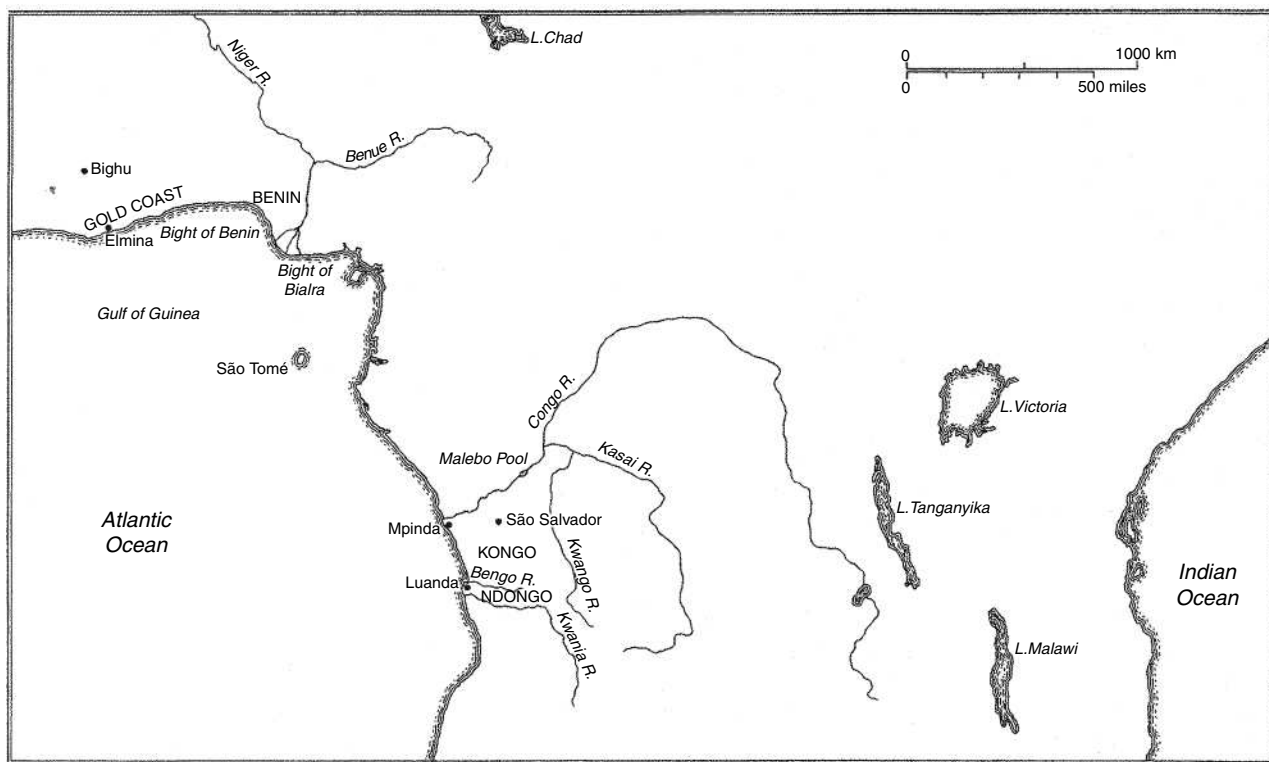
Elsewhere in West Africa, the Portuguese found an active trade in slaves on the Gold Coast, where they were also able to purchase gold.³⁰ Muslim merchants had established commercial links this far south in pursuit of the same gold and, as with the Senegambia, they were on the coast itself. Gold was found in alluvial washings throughout the forest, so that it was easy once again for the Portuguese to buy gold there. The Muslim network was long established, however, so that the Portuguese dealt with these merchants as well as the actual producers of gold. The Muslim traders took gold north from the Akan deposits toward Timbuktu and thence across the Sahara. They traded in many other goods, too. They brought salt, livestock, textiles, and copperware south, and to the north they took kola nuts, which were widely consumed in the savanna as a stimulant.

The Portuguese imported slaves to buy gold. Perhaps ironically, the first European slave traders on this stretch of the coast became involved as carriers in the domestic slave trade of West Africa. As was the case in the Senegambia, therefore, the early contribution of the Portuguese to the slave trade was to modify existing patterns of commerce. The Portuguese began purchasing slaves in the “slave rivers” of the Benin coast sometime in the 1470s, and the 1480 expedition acquired 400 slaves.³¹ By the early sixteenth century, the trade between the Bight of Benin and the Gold Coast was on the order of 500 to 600 slaves per year. These were channeled through the Portuguese depot at São Jorge da Mina, later to be called Elmina. These slaves were sold to African merchants for use as porters in the trade with the interior, although a few were kept at São Jorge da Mina as laborers.³²

In the first two decades of the sixteenth century, slave exports totaled about 2,300–2,500 per year, rising to 5,400 per year in 1516–1521, a level that was maintained at least until the mid-century. This increase was related to the inclusion of the Kingdom of Kongo into the commercial network of the Portuguese and to the development of the island of São Tomé, located off shore in the Gulf of Guinea, as a transit point for the slave trade and a plantation center for the production of sugarcane. These developments were a further extension of existing commercial practices. São Tomé became another in a string of depots: Slaves were brought from Kongo to the island for shipment to the Gold Coast, Madeira, the Cape Verde Islands, and Portugal. Between 1510 and 1540, four to six slaving vessels per year were kept occupied hauling slaves to the Gold Coast, for example. Ships varied in size from caravels that could carry 30 to 80 slaves to larger vessels that could transport as many as 100 to 120 slaves.³³

The emergence of a trade that was independent of the Muslim sector was closely associated with the Kingdom of Kongo, the major state on the coast of central Africa when the Portuguese arrived there in 1482.³⁴ King Afonso I (1506–1545) formed an alliance with the Portuguese crown, through their representatives at the Kongo capital of São Salvador and on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe. Afonso attempted to introduce reforms designed to increase his power, including the acceptance of Christianity and the reliance on Portuguese advisors. Afonso used the slave trade to promote the interests of the state. Through border skirmishes and tribute collection, the state acquired slaves for export. Afonso even managed the transport of some slaves to São Tomé through the agency of two members of the royal household who were stationed in São Tomé in 1526.³⁵

These efforts at centralization were only partially successful; indeed the recurrent theme of Kongo history in the sixteenth century was one of conflict between royal attempts at monopoly and the activities of private traders, both Portuguese and Kongo. On the one side, Afonso directed trade through São Salvador and the port of Mpinda, near the mouth of the Congo River.³⁶ Except for the provincial governors of Ndongo, in the south, the nobility cooperated



MAP 2. The Kingdom of Kongo and the Gulf of Guinea in the Sixteenth Century.

with these royal efforts. A board of inquiry protected official interests by investigating alleged kidnappings, which attempted to restrain the movement of private traders. Private traders, on the other hand, were not to be outdone. The clients of Fernão de Melo, who had the Portuguese charter for São Tomé, and Antonio Carneiro, who had the charter for Príncipe, bought slaves wherever they could. By the 1520s, their agents traveled into the interior beyond São Salvador, probably as far as Malebo Pool (Stanley Pool) on the Congo River and Ndongo in the south.³⁷

The principal conflict was between slave traders, official and private, and not between Kongo and Portugal, despite occasional differences over the autonomy of the Catholic Church in Kongo and other issues. This struggle over the control of trade facilitated the growth of slave exports. In the 1520s, exports from Mpinda were on the order of 2,000 to 3,000 per year. By the 1530s, the volume had increased from 4,000 to 5,000 in some years, and in 1548 to between 6,000 and 7,000. Most of these slaves were sent to São Tomé, from where they were redistributed elsewhere or used on local plantations. São Tomé began exporting to the Americas in the 1530s, and by 1550 the bulk of the transit trade was destined for the Spanish Caribbean. Thereafter, the trade to the Americas predominated until the decline of São Tomé at the end of the sixteenth century.³⁸

The Kongo-São Tomé axis collapsed in the last third of the sixteenth century. In 1568, invaders from the interior penetrated the kingdom, even occupying São Salvador until a combined Portuguese-Kongolese expedition relieved the capital. This weakened Kongo temporarily, which worked to the advantage of the private traders. In 1576, the Portuguese crown, interested in containing the interlopers itself but relying less on the Kongo monarchy than previously, established a base at Luanda Bay, which had become the main avenue into the interior south of Kongo.³⁹ Now slaves were shipped directly to the Americas from Luanda, as well as from São Tomé. Official Portuguese efforts appear to have impeded the interlopers somewhat; before the establishment of Luanda, this southern trade from Ndongo was estimated at 10,000 slaves in peak years; after 1576, exports declined, although the government share increased. The private traders were forced to bypass the Portuguese stations, just as they had previously bypassed the Kongo capital at the height of Kongo control. As a result, the trade as a whole probably remained at about the same level, that is, several thousand slaves per year.

From 1450 to 1600, about 410,000 slaves were exported from Africa via the Atlantic basin, including those ending up on São Tomé and other islands off the African coast. Those slaves destined for internal African markets gradually became a smaller proportion of the total number. The trade was about a third of the scale of the external trade across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean in the same period. Nonetheless, the development of the trans-Atlantic trade and the tremendous expansion beginning in the last half of the sixteenth century resulting from the shipment of slaves to the Americas represented a major departure in the history of the slave trade.

Slavery Along the Guinea Coast

By the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, slavery had already changed along some parts of the Guinea coast from being a marginal feature of societies based on kinship to being an institution that was related to more complex social structures. The growth of the European market for slaves accelerated this process: Slavery became associated with the export trade as well as domestic use. As enslavement increased as a conscious activity of ambitious men and governments, slaves became more available for both the export and domestic sectors.

Slavery was already an important institution in Kongo even before the Portuguese arrived.⁴⁰ The Kongo nobility settled slaves in the capital district and in Mbanza Sonyo, the coastal area where Mpinda was located, and as a result these two provinces were much more densely inhabited than other parts of the state. The alliance with the Portuguese, particularly the use of Portuguese soldiers as early as 1514, enhanced the ability of the state to acquire slaves, who were either exported in exchange for imported goods and services or used to supplement the domestic slave population. Some slaves became soldiers, especially Tio captives from north of the Congo River; the Kongo nobles also retained slaves in their retinues. As nobles were transferred from one province to another for military or administrative duties, they took these slaves with them.

The establishment of slave estates and villages around São Salvador and in Mbanza Sonyo appears to have continued until the 1560s, when an invasion of warriors known as Jaga temporarily halted these developments. The Jaga occupied the capital from 1568 until 1572, before a combined Portuguese-Kongo army drove the intruders back into the interior.⁴¹ The Jaga may have sold some of the inhabitants around São Salvador to slave merchants; many slaves may have fled with their masters or escaped altogether. The Jaga had a reputation as cannibals, which at least indicates that people feared these warriors considerably. No matter what the effect of their occupation was, conditions in the province had been restored by the end of the century. A report that applies equally to São Salvador and Mbanza Sonyo makes clear that a large portion of the Kongo population in these districts was enslaved:

There are no [free] men who cultivate the ground, nor men who work by the day, nor anyone who is willing to work for a wage. Only slaves labour and serve. Men who are powerful have a great number of slaves whom they have captured in war or whom they have purchased. They conduct business through these slaves by sending them to markets where they buy and sell according to the master's orders.⁴²

This report suggests that slavery was no longer a simple case of dependency in a society based on kinship. A complete transformation of the social order on the scale of Muslim areas probably had not occurred, but slave holdings were still large enough to indicate that a transformation was under way.

Kongo nobles even invested in plantations on São Tomé, which may indicate that slave labor in Kongo itself was sometimes organized on a plantation

model. A Portuguese description of São Tomé in 1550 makes it clear that there were a number of black planters who were rich and whose daughters married Portuguese residents.⁴³ By this time, the largest plantations ranged in size from 100 to 400 slaves. Slaves not only worked in the sugar fields but also grew their own provisions. They usually lived in huts with their families, although later in the century slaves were sometimes housed in barracks.⁴⁴ These conditions were probably not very different from those on the estates in Kongo, except that it is unlikely that barracks were ever a feature of slavery in Kongo. The real difference between slavery on São Tomé and slavery in Kongo was in the intentions of the slave owners; São Tomé planters raised sugar for export to Portugal,⁴⁵ whereas Kongo slave masters wanted food crops, particularly millet, which was consumed by the large establishments of the nobility and was not destined for export.

The demand for slaves on the Gold Coast, which the Portuguese satisfied by importing slaves from Benin and Kongo via São Tomé, reveals that slavery was an important institution in Benin and the small Akan states on the Gold Coast, as well as in Kongo. It may be that slaves were used in gold mining and panning at this time, as they were in the early seventeenth century. Local merchants on the Gold Coast used slaves as porters, which establishes their importance as common workers. Around 1600, de Marees reported: "Here there are no labourers to be found to serve people for hire and reward, but only slaves and captives who must wear out their lives in slavery."⁴⁶ At this time, and probably indicative of practice for sometime into the past, debtors could be seized – de Marees says that they could be enslaved. This indicates that local mechanisms were also responsible for establishing servile relationships.⁴⁷ Debtors may well have become slaves, although de Marees appears to have confused pawns with slaves, or at best he learned of the illegal enslavement of pawns, who were theoretically protected from sale.

Slavery in the Sierra Leone hinterland was related to war. In the sixteenth century, a series of invasions from the interior displaced many people, some of whom were enslaved. In the 1560s, at least some of these captives were used in the fields. The English slave merchant and pirate, John Hawkins, who was there at the time, learned about the importance of slavery first-hand; from an island base, Hawkins led raiding parties to the mainland to seize slaves, which helps establish that the trade had not yet become firmly part of the slave supply mechanism that later characterized the trans-Atlantic trade from Sierra Leone. Otherwise, European merchants would simply have bought slaves, which usually took less time and involved fewer risks than capturing slaves.

In this Island we stayed certaine daies, going every day on shore to take the Inhabitants, with burning and spoiling their townes, who before were Sapiens, and were conquered by the Samboses, Inhabitants beyond Sierre Leona.... These inhabitants have diverse of the Sapiens, which they tooke in the warres as their slaves, whome onely they kept to till the

ground, in that they neither have the knowledge thereof, nor yet will worke themselves, of whome wee tooke many in that place, but of the Samboses none at all, for they fled into the maine.⁴⁸

Hawkins's description suggests that the slave population was large enough for many of the productive activities of society to be performed by slave labor. This exploitation of slaves may well have been confined to those captured in war; there is no evidence on the fate of slave children, who, nonetheless, probably would have been incorporated into lineages. Significantly, Hawkins's party seized the 'Sapi' slaves, not the 'Sambose' masters; this appears to have been a common practice in many places. Slaves were often reenslaved, thereby preventing the assimilation and amelioration of status that was their due according to custom. Slavery was changing, but a full transformation had not occurred. The presence of Europeans on the coast and the growth in market demand probably encouraged this change. Now captives could be sold as well as used domestically. Whereas the size of the slave population may have fluctuated in the past in accordance with war and peace, now a steady demand for slaves drained victims from the area. The extent to which this was internalized into local society is not yet clear, but the number of slaves available for export soon became sufficient for European demand, so that it was no longer necessary for pirates like Hawkins to seize people. It is likely that the size of the local slave population also increased.⁴⁹

Father Baltasar Barreira, a Jesuit priest who visited the Cape Verde Islands and Sierra Leone in 1605, enquired into the methods of enslavement on the upper Guinea coast, and, concerned with justifying the institution of slavery and Portuguese involvement in the slave trade, he collected useful information on the origins of slaves. Although his tract, *Concerning the Slaves ... that come from the Parts of Guinea which are called Cape Verde*, contains a distorted view of African society and hence does not represent an African perspective on enslavement, Barreira did rely on information from slave owners and traders, as well as earlier Portuguese sources, which does establish the range of methods involved in the enslavement of people.⁵⁰ Barreira lists captivity in war as common; he was even under the impression that local wars were sometimes fought to obtain slaves for export. Whether or not this was true, slaves were certainly readily available, and Europeans no longer had to raid for slaves, as Hawkins had done.

Convicted criminals were also enslaved. Barreira provides a list of offenses that were punishable through enslavement, although it is unclear how long such punishments had been inflicted or how often they were enforced.

There are other ways of enslaving in a legal way, as when it is proved that one black is a witch, or he confesses it himself; or that he has killed another with poison; or that he is intimate with any of the king's wives; or that he is inciting war against the king; or that he asks the *chinas* – so they call their idols – to kill the king, in which case if the king happens to fall ill, not only do they kill the delinquent or sell him outside the kingdom, and confiscate all his possessions, but they also enslave and sell all his relatives,

for fear that any of them, in revenge, also asks the *chinas* to kill him. This is also done by subjects who are not kings.⁵¹

In this description, “kings” referred to powerful men in general, for there were no large states in the interior at this time. Barreira also provides information on the means of determining guilt through poison ordeals and spirit possession. Besides these “legal” means, people were kidnapped, and given that neither local merchants nor the Portuguese enquired into the methods of enslavement at the time of purchase, these practices probably became more common as the export trade expanded.

The relationship between the European slave trade and developments in local African societies helps clarify the process of historical change related to the development of slavery as an institution.⁵² In its indigenous form, slavery functioned on the edge of society. There were some slaves who had failed to pay debts, been convicted of crimes, charged with sorcery, seized in war, or transferred as compensation for damages. Nonetheless, the basic structure of society was the kinship unit. Slaves emerged almost as incidental products of the interaction between groups of kin. Slaves could be sold to outsiders, and here lay the possibility for regular trade, although it was one that could vary in importance. The presence of merchants provided an incentive for developing a sustained trade, not a haphazard one that fluctuated depending on the problems of kinship. Once merchants organized the collection of slaves, the exchange was transformed. Whereas slaves continued to move back and forth between groups of kin, with little, if any, discrepancy in the balance of this flow, now slaves were funneled toward the export market too. The net effect was the loss of these slaves to Africa and the substitution of imported commodities for humans.

The Export Trade in Slaves, 1600–1800

By 1600, an important structural change in the political economy of some parts of Africa was well underway. Islam continued to be an agent of change in the northern savanna and along the shores of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Slaves were exported on a sustained level, and enslavement and slavery were still interpreted largely in terms of Islamic law and tradition. The growth of the trans-Atlantic slave trade had already exposed west-central Africa to a radically new influence. In the next two centuries, this influence was to have an even greater effect on much of the Guinea coast than the earlier trade in slaves had had anywhere in Africa, with the result that the people of the Atlantic basin experienced a major transformation in social organization.¹ The dynamic changes along the Atlantic shores where the export trade became so substantial in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries transformed slavery there in ways quite different from the earlier pattern in the Islamic belt, although structurally the impact was the same: Where slaves had once been an incidental element in society, they now became common. The ability to supply slaves required adjustments in the methods of enslavement and the development of a commercial infrastructure. These changes in turn were accompanied by increased domestic use of slaves.

The Volume of the Export Trade, 1600–1800

Despite the unevenness of the data available for a census of the export trade in slaves, it is possible to make some broad comparisons between its various sectors (see Table 3.1). The trade increased steadily from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The total number of slaves who left Africa – about 1,088,000 in the sixteenth century – includes 750,000 slaves allocated to the Islamic trade and 338,000 for the trans-Atlantic trade. The estimate for the Islamic traffic could be significantly off the mark but is unlikely to be less than 500,000

TABLE 3.1. *Estimated Slave Departures from Africa, 1500–1800*

Sector	1500–1600	%	1600–1700	%	1700–1800	%	Total	%
Red Sea	100,000	9.2	100,000	3.6	200,000	2.6	400,000	3.4
Sahara	550,000	50.6	700,000	25.2	700,000	9.0	1,950,000	16.7
East Africa	100,000	9.2	100,000	3.6	400,000	5.1	600,000	5.1
Atlantic	338,000	31.1	1,876,000	67.6	6,495,000	83.3	8,709,000	74.7
TOTAL	1,088,000		2,776,000		7,795,000		11,659,000	

Source: Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.2 3.3, 3.7. Also see Ralph Austen, “The 19th century Islamic slave trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea coasts): A tentative census,” *Slavery and Abolition* 9, 3 (1988), 21–44; José C. Curto, “A quantitative reassessment of the legal Portuguese slave trade from Luanda, Angola, 1710–1830,” *African Economic History*, 20 (1992), 1–25; Curto, “The legal Portuguese slave trade from Benguela, Angola, 1730–1828: A quantitative re-appraisal,” *Africa* (São Paulo) 16 (1993), 101–16; and Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society. The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim Press, 1995). It should be noted that slaves destined for the offshore islands of the western African coast and Europe for the period 1600–1850 are not included. The estimated number of slaves leaving western Africa was correspondingly higher. The figures used here rely on the *Slave Trade Database*, which does not account for slaves sent to the offshore islands or Europe in this period. See David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Manolo Florentino, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>).

or more than 1,000,000. The estimate for the trans-Atlantic movement is far more accurate. Hence the sixteenth-century migration probably was on the order of 800,000 to 1,300,000 people. The seventeenth-century trade is subject to less error, and the eighteenth-century trade to less still, because the proportion of the trans-Atlantic trade – which can be estimated far more accurately than the Islamic trade – steadily increased, thereby reducing the relative size of the Islamic trade and correspondingly minimizing the error inherent in an assessment of its volume.

In the seventeenth century, the Islamic trade was probably on the same scale as in the sixteenth century – roughly 800,000 people – although again the number was perhaps as low as 500,000 or as high as 1,000,000, but the great increase in the Atlantic traffic meant that the total number of people who left doubled from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century and more than doubled from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century (from 2,766,000 to 7,795,000), even though the Islamic trade expanded in the eighteenth century too (up perhaps 300,000, all in the Indian Ocean). The trans-Atlantic trade rose from about one-fourth of the total trade in slaves in the sixteenth century to more than four-fifths in the eighteenth century. Over the period as a whole, the trans-Atlantic sector accounted for almost three quarters of the enslaved population that left Africa. The total number of slaves sold across the Atlantic between 1600 and 1800 was on the order of 8.4 million.² It is likely that scholars will be able to modify the conclusions reached in the pages that follow as new material is examined that will revise the export figures. The concern here, therefore, is to

TABLE 3.2. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1601–1700*

Period	Number of Slaves	Annual Average
1601–1625	353,000	14,100
1626–1650	315,000	12,600
1651–1675	488,000	19,500
1676–1700	720,000	28,800
TOTAL	1,876,000	

Source: David Eltis, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, and Manolo Florentino, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>).

understand where *most* of the individuals who were shipped to the Americas came from, that is, the 1,876,000 who were sold from 1600 to 1700 (Table 3.2) and the 6,495,000 who were sold in the eighteenth century (Table 3.3).

The largest exporting region in the early seventeenth century was west-central Africa, which continued sending thousands of slaves a year to the Americas, thus consolidating a pattern that began a century earlier. Senegambia and Benin maintained their relatively modest share of the trade as well, each providing about a thousand slaves a year. Slaves came from elsewhere too. The really dramatic expansion of the Atlantic trade began after 1650, and from then slave exports affected ever larger parts of Africa. In the last 50 years of the seventeenth century, more slaves were sold to Europeans on the Atlantic coast than in the previous 200 years combined. This phenomenal growth was a response to the spread of plantation slavery in the Americas. From the 1640s through the 1660s, sugar spread from Brazil to the Lesser Antilles – Barbados, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Kitts, and Antigua – and these new colonies acquired tens of thousands of enslaved workers. In the third quarter almost 20,000 people went each year, but in the last quarter of the century, when approximately 720,000 slaves left African shores for America, the annual average approached 30,000 people. By now, sugar plantations were being established on Jamaica and Saint Dominguez, which rapidly became the two largest producers of sugar. As a result, the dramatic surge in slave exports continued into the eighteenth century, reaching figures on the order of 65,000 people per year for the whole century. We must remember that these figures are primarily based on the known volume of slave arrivals in the Americas and not on the actual number of people who left Africa, which undoubtedly was higher because some slaves, perhaps on the order of 15–20 percent, died on the Atlantic crossing. The estimates used here take into allowance this mortality.

The first major source of slaves for the Americas, the area of Angola and Kongo, remained a substantial exporter far into the nineteenth century. The second region to become a big supplier was the Slave Coast (Bight of Benin), which entered a period of particularly rapid expansion in the late seventeenth

TABLE 3.3. *Atlantic Slave Trade by National Carrier, 1701–1800*

National Carrier	Number of Slaves	Percent
English	2,545,000	39.2
Portuguese	2,213,000	34.1
French	1,139,000	17.5
Dutch	330,000	5.1
North American	189,000	2.9
Danish	67,000	1.0
Spanish	11,000	0.2
TOTAL	6,494,000	

Source: Eltis, et al., *Slave Trade Database*. The national trades have been studied in considerable detail; see Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 151, 207, 211; Roger Anstey, "The volume of the North American slave-carrying trade from Africa, 1761–1810," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, 42:12 (1975b), 201; Roger Anstey, "The volume and profitability of the British slave trade, 1761–1807," in S. L. Engerman and E. D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975c), 13; Roger Anstey, "The British slave trade, 1751–1807," *Journal of African History* 17:4 (1976), 261, 267, 607; Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 28; Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 27; Robert Stein, "Measuring the French slave trade, 1713–1792/3," *Journal of African History* 19:4 (1978), 519; Johannes Postma, "The origin of African slaves: the Dutch activities on the Guinea coast, 1675–1795," in S. L. Engerman and E. D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975b), 201; Svend Erik Green-Pederson, "The History of the Danish Negro slave trade, 1733–1807," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 42 (1957), 201; José C. Curto, "A quantitative reassessment of the legal Portuguese slave trade from Luanda, Angola, 1710–1830," *African Economic History*, 20 (1992), 1–25; Curto, "The legal Portuguese slave trade from Benguela, Angola, 1730–1828: A quantitative re-appraisal," *Africa* (São Paulo) 16 (1993), 101–16; and Joseph C. Miller, "The political economy of the Angolan slave trade in the eighteenth century," *The Indian Historical Review* 15:1/2 (1988/89), 152–87.

century, continuing into the eighteenth century until the end of the trade in the nineteenth. The third area to experience a profound rise in slave departures was the Gold Coast, whose exports rose sharply in the early eighteenth century but fell off by 1800. The fourth area was the Bight of Biafra, centered on the Niger delta and the Cross River, which suddenly became a major exporter in the 1740s and continued to be so for a century. Other parts of West Africa had temporary spurts in their export figures. Thus the Bandama River was important before 1750, the coast near the Futa Jallon highlands was busy in the 1750s

and 1760s, and ports near where Monrovia and Freetown now stand handled some traffic at different times. Finally, the Senegambia, with its connections to the Muslim interior, always supplied some slaves, although never on the scale of the four major exporting regions.

These regions are discussed in terms of the estimated number of slave departures by quarter in the seventeenth century and by decade in the eighteenth century. These figures are presented in several forms. First, the source of the enslaved population shifted to the region of the Kingdom of Kongo in the first two-thirds of the sixteenth century. (Table 3.2). Kongo and neighboring Angola remained by far the most important source of slaves well into the seventeenth century. Secondly, the Bight of Benin became a major source of slaves in the 1670s, and within a couple of decades surpassed west-central Africa in terms of the numbers of slaves being sold across the Atlantic. The Gold Coast also became an important source of slaves, for the first time, in this period. The far-western coast (Senegambia and upper Guinea) continued to supply some slaves, roughly on the same level as in the sixteenth century, whereas the Bight of Biafra was relatively unimportant. Kongo continued to be a major source of slaves as a result of civil wars that erupted after 1665, which partially accounts for the sustained level of exports from west-central Africa. Thirdly, an examination of the regional composition of the trade for each decade in the eighteenth century suggests that the trade expanded rapidly in three phases (Table 3.4). In the first third of the century, the Bight of Benin led all regions in numbers of slaves being dispatched. The Gold Coast continued at previous levels, whereas the number of slaves leaving west-central Africa increased to levels that were unprecedented, increased steadily until the 1730s. Both Senegambia and the Bight of Biafra, although representing a small portion of the total trade, also accounted for increasing numbers of slaves.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, west-central Africa resumed its position as the largest source of slaves for the Americas. The Bight of Benin declined by almost half, whereas Senegambia, the upper Guinea coast, and the Bight of Biafra expanded rapidly. In the last third of the century, the numbers of slaves leaving west-central Africa increased to levels that were unprecedented, exceeding the level of departures for all of Africa in the first decade of the century. In this period, the number of people leaving every region increased. The Gold Coast and the Bights of Benin and Biafra together exported almost as many slaves as west-central Africa.

For the eighteenth century as a whole, the trade was heavily concentrated on the Gold Coast, in the Bights of Benin and Biafra and above all in west-central Africa. Taken together, these areas accounted for almost 88 percent of the trade. The 2,365,000 who came from west-central Africa represented more than 36.4 percent of the trade, whereas another 1,223,000 slaves (18.8 percent) came from the Bight of Benin, 1,014,000 slaves (15.6 percent) came from the Gold Coast, and 904,000 slaves (13.9 percent) came from the Bight of Biafra. By contrast, the Senegambia region (363,000), the upper Guinea coast

TABLE 3.4. *Regional Origins of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Trade*

	Sene-Gambia	Upper Guinea	Wind ward	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central	SE Africa	Total Africa
1701-1710	16,300	1,200	3,100	81,100	136,900	22,000	133,400	100	394,200
1711-1720	22,700	3,100	4,400	97,300	173,400	34,600	131,900	10,000	453,400
1721-1730	34,900	9,400	4,500	113,900	178,300	41,800	145,400	3,900	548,400
1731-1740	44,800	1,500	9,400	106,700	111,100	56,600	232,000	1,200	598,000
1741-1750	24,200	8,000	25,200	61,600	93,400	93,900	245,400	0	586,600
1751-1760	50,600	17,400	44,100	88,200	89,200	93,300	223,800	3,000	643,000
1761-1770	52,400	42,300	76,500	108,700	101,600	146,500	280,200	1,900	819,000
1771-1780	51,300	36,600	65,200	112,600	113,200	109,900	267,300	2,900	755,700
1781-1790	37,900	31,400	36,100	135,000	110,200	151,200	333,900	28,700	868,000
1791-1800	28,000	51,100	21,200	109,400	100,800	154,600	371,800	19,000	848,400
TOTAL	363,200	202,000	289,600	1,014,500	1,223,200	904,600	2,365,200	70,600	6,494,600

Source: Eltis et al., *Slave Voyage Database*.

TABLE 3.5. *West African Slave Prices: Semidecadal Averages, 1663–1775*

Year	Price in £ Sterling of 1601	Number of Observations
1663–1667	3.29	1
1668–1672	3.00	2
1673–1677	1.76	3
1678–1682	3.67	12
1683–1687	3.74	9
1688–1692	3.22	3
1693–1697	4.24	4
1698–1702	5.43	12
1703–1707	10.24	10
1708–1712	11.21	9
1713–1717	11.75	13
1718–1722	12.77	13
1723–1727	11.89	13
1728–1732	13.37	9
1733–1737	17.65	9
1738–1742	18.92	5
1743–1747	11.13	6
1748–1752	14.26	19
1753–1757	12.52	16
1758–1762	14.07	9
1763–1767	16.54	15
1768–1772	17.76	15
1773–1775	15.96	9

Source: Richard Bean, *The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1975), 72. Bean's prices are calculated as the prime cost in Britain of goods used to purchase slaves rather than the actual price of slaves on the African coast.

(202,000), and the windward coast of modern Liberia and western Ivory Coast (290,000) accounted for slightly more than 13 percent of total exports.

Furthermore, the price structure of the Atlantic slave market over these two centuries suggests that prices rose fourfold or fivefold, whereas supply increased on the order of two-and-one-half times. The data on slave prices are most complete for the last third of the seventeenth century and for the eighteenth century (see Table 3.5). Although iron bars, cowrie shells, lengths of cloth, and other items were actually the currencies used by African merchants in calculating the price of slaves, the pound sterling value of goods exported to Africa can be used as a guide to the price structure of the slave trade. The cost of goods purchased in Europe that were used to buy slaves remained fairly steady at £3 to £4 sterling between the 1660s and the early 1690s, whereupon the price doubled within a few years. The prime cost of goods in Britain leveled off at £10 to £13 from the middle of the first decade of the eighteenth century until the early 1730s, when it rose again to about £18 to £19, before falling back to a lower

level during the 1740s. For the rest of the century, the prime cost of goods gradually rose again, ranging from £13 to £18. During this period, supply rose from 30,000 slaves per year in the last quarter of the seventeenth century to 85,000–87,000 people per year in the last two decades of the eighteenth century; hence it is clear that prices increased with the supply of slaves (see Table 3.4). Various scholars have measured the elasticity of the supply of slaves with respect to price changes: Bean has calculated a figure of 0.75 and 0.83 for two different periods within a century; Manning has reached a figure of 1.5 for the Slave Coast alone; LeVeen has estimated a figure of 0.81.³ LeVeen's calculation, for example, means that a 10 percent increase in prices corresponded to an 8.1 percent increase in exports. While these calculations do not deny that noneconomic motives were important in the rising supply of slaves, these comparisons of volume and price do indicate that economic factors were major determinants of the response of African suppliers to rising demand.

The question of price is important in determining the extent to which African suppliers responded to market forces in catering to the export trade. This issue has concerned historians who are interested in establishing the cause of the expansion in slave departures. Was the increased scale related to the conscious decisions of slavers who were responding to higher prices, or was the increase in supply a relatively incidental feature of the extension of enslavement that resulted from the spread of warfare and other politically motivated actions?⁴ LeVeen's analysis of prices clearly demonstrates that market factors did influence the supply mechanism; at least he has been able to show a correlation between rising prices and expanding supply.⁵ Market forces alone, however, are not the only influence on the supply of slaves. A response to changing economic conditions reflects the attitudes of the enslavers and their acceptance of the slave trade as a legitimate activity. Further, the costs of investment in equipment and the organization of slave gathering and marketing became an influence on the available supply of victims. The sale of war prisoners, even if prices were low, was desirable to those government officials wanting to rid themselves of enemies; if some compensation could be gained through their disposal, so much the better. In short, market conditions aside, the maintenance of a steady demand for slaves influenced attitudes; when combined with rising demand, the supply of slaves could and did increase dramatically.

The Dominance of West-Central Africa

West-central Africa, including the coast from Cabinda and Loango to Angola, accounted for the majority of slaves exported to the Americas until the last quarter of the seventeenth century and a major share of the total thereafter.⁶ From 1600 to 1800, more than 3.5 million slaves were shipped from this region alone, which represented about a third of all slaves exported from Africa in these two centuries, including the trans-Atlantic trade and the established Islamic trade. The portion of the Atlantic trade that can be attributed to west-central Africa

is correspondingly larger than a third. At the height of the trade in the eighteenth century, this region was the largest single exporter, except for the first three decades, when it was the second largest source. In the last several decades of the century, the peak years of the trans-Atlantic trade, west-central Africa accounted for more than 40 percent of the migration of slaves.

The Kingdom of Kongo continued to be a major source of slaves, and other states on the periphery of Kongo assumed an increasingly important role in transferring slaves to the Europeans on the coast. These included the Vili to the north of the Congo River and several Mbundu states to the south and east. European rivalries on the coast resulted in direct intervention in local politics, especially in Angola, where the Portuguese maintained bases for raiding and trading. The extent of European involvement on the mainland was more pronounced here than anywhere else on the Guinea coast. The Portuguese used Luanda as a base for raids into the interior, except for a few years in the 1640s when the Dutch expelled the Portuguese. Otherwise, the Portuguese dominated Angola, and the Dutch and English traded at Cabinda and Loango, north of the Congo River, or at the mouth of the Bengo River, north of Luanda.

A series of commercial corridors tapped the interior, so that the supply area was gradually pushed further inland as slave demand increased. These routes included overland trails and rivers that channeled slaves toward two points, Malebo Pool (Stanley Pool) on the Congo River in the north and Luanda in the south. Rapids on the river prevented boats passing between Malebo Pool and the coast, and hence slaves were marched overland to one of several ports on the Loango coast and at Cabinda. In the south, river transport was not used, for the tributaries of the Congo flowed northward while slaves had to march westward to reach the coast. Fourthly, during the eighteenth century, several inland states became principal suppliers, the most important of which were Lunda and Kazembe, whose provinces paid tribute in slaves who could then be exported. The population of the region lived in widely scattered kinship groups that provided the slaves, either through direct taxation or raids, or both.

Already by 1600, several thousand slaves per year were being exported from this stretch of coast, with a particularly dramatic expansion taking place in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. In the first half of the seventeenth century, departures reached 668,000 slaves, or more than 13,000 slaves per year, much of this volume a result of the trade along the coast south of the equator. After 1650, annual departures from west-central Africa averaged more than 11,000 people. Portuguese expeditions into Kongo and other parts of the interior continued to supply slaves, but many slaves were a by-product of civil wars that ravaged Kongo. Moreover, areas deeper in the interior became more important. Two Mbundu states, Kasanje and Matamba, dominated the trade routes in the interior of Luanda.

The traffic was on a level of 13,000 per year in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, rising to 14,500 embarkations per year in the following decade. The scale of the movement from west-central Africa continued

to increase dramatically, averaging over 23,000 people per year in the years 1731–1760, whereupon the figures again reached a new plateau, exceeding 27,500 slaves annually in 1761–1680 and rising still further to 35,000 per year in the last two decades of the century. In the course of a century, the scale of the migration had increased almost fourfold, and this increase was from a base that was already considerable. The structural changes that accompanied this growth were extremely important to the local political economy. The scale of the trade required major adjustments in the ability to enslave people and to ship them to points of export (see Chapter 4). These changes in turn affected a larger and larger geographical area, beginning with Kongo and the Portuguese stronghold at Luanda but ultimately reaching the far interior of the Congo River basin.

The Bight of Benin, 1640–1800

The Bight of Benin, or the “Slave Coast,” as the Europeans knew it, was the only exporting region that temporarily displaced west-central Africa as the largest single supplier.⁷ The modest trade of early Portuguese contact continued into the early seventeenth century. Estimates from the 1640s suggest trade on the order of 1,200 slaves per year, primarily from Benin and its neighbors. Restrictions on the trade there prevented the steady growth in slave volume, and it was not until new states and different routes were developed in the second half of the seventeenth century that the trade entered a period of expansion that was to justify the European epithet. The trade rose from the modest levels of the early seventeenth century, when only a few hundred people left each year. After c. 1655, the trade rose dramatically, from at least 2,000 people per year and rising to almost 4,000 per year in 1676–1680, doubling to 8,000 departures annually in 1681–1685, and reaching 12,000 per year by 1700. The rise continued into the first decades of the eighteenth century, reaching 14,600 slaves per year and eventually accounting for more 20,000 people per year in 1726–1730 at the time of Dahomey’s conquest of Ouidah (Table 3.6). For the fifty years from 1681 to 1730, approximately 670,000 people left the Bight of Benin, one-third of the estimated number of slaves in this period. The Bight was the largest source of slaves, even exceeding the number of people obtained in west-central Africa. Thereafter, the scale of slave exports declined to about 11,000 per year, rising again briefly to 14,600 per year in the early 1750s but otherwise continuing to decline to about 9,000 people in the late 1790s. After the 1730s, west-central Africa always exported more slaves than the Bight of Benin, and by a considerable margin, usually twice or three times as many. For the eighteenth century as a whole, 1,284,000 slaves (almost 20 percent of total exports) left from the Bight of Benin, 1,492,000 in the century and a quarter when slave exports were substantial.

The surge in exports from the Slave Coast had no connection with the Kingdom of Benin, which had once supplied a thousand or more slaves to European merchants. In fact, the export of slaves from the Kingdom of Benin

TABLE 3.6. *Bight of Benin Slave Trade, 1601–1730*

Period	Number of Slaves	Annual Average
1601–1650	9,600	192
1651–1655	1,800	360
1656–1660	10,300	2,060
1661–1665	12,800	2,560
1666–1670	17,200	3,440
1671–1675	10,700	2,140
1676–1680	19,100	3,820
1681–1685	40,700	8,140
1686–1690	39,200	7,840
1691–1695	47,900	9,580
1696–1700	60,500	12,100
1701–1705	73,000	14,600
1706–1710	63,900	12,780
1711–1715	72,000	14,400
1716–1720	77,500	15,500
1721–1725	91,700	18,340
1726–1730	102,700	20,540
TOTAL	750,600	

Source: Eltis et al., *Slave Voyage Database*. For an earlier estimate of the trade, see Patrick Manning, “The slave trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640–1890,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 117.

actually declined as a result of government restrictions on the sale of male slaves. Instead, three new factors account for the astronomical expansion in exports. First, the prospects for commercial profit seem to have been a strong motive in the struggle for power along the lagoons behind the Bight of Benin. A series of lagoon-side ports tried to dominate trade, from Grand and Little Popo in the west through Ouidah (Whydah), Offra, Jakin, Epe, Apa, Porto Novo, Badagry, and Lagos in the east. Allada, centered inland from the lagoons, successfully imposed some dominance on the lagoon, and its ports at Offra and Jakin, and then its subjugation of Ouidah, assured mastery of the export trade at the end of the seventeenth century, when exports became important. Secondly, the Yoruba Kingdom of Oyo initiated a series of wars in the interior that resulted in the enslavement of many people. Oyo was a savanna state; its capital was located only 50 km from the Niger and 300 km inland from the coast. Its strength lay in its cavalry, based on horses imported from farther north, which enabled the state to dominate trade to the coast. Thirdly, Dahomey, centered 100 km inland, intervened in coastal politics and raided its northern neighbors from the 1720s, thereby adding to the export volume. Dahomey used Ouidah as its principal port, as did Oyo until after the middle of the eighteenth century.

Even then Ouidah remained the leading port and may have accounted for the departure of almost a million people from the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth century. Although Oyo forced Dahomey to pay tribute, this was not sufficient to guarantee access to Ouidah, and therefore, Oyo developed alternate ports at Porto Novo and Badagry further east.⁸

There were a number of important differences in the development of the export trade on the “Slave Coast” from the pattern that prevailed in west-central Africa. First, there was no European military presence like that of the Portuguese at Luanda and in Kongo, and Europeans did not raid for slaves. Instead Portuguese, French, British, and other traders were confined to coastal ports where they were compelled to trade on terms established by port officials. Secondly, Muslim traders provided links between slave-exporting states and the far interior, so that some slaves and other goods were acquired through a network of interregional trade. The export trade in slaves was only one sector in a complex internal African trade. Thirdly, the growth of the slave trade was closely associated with political developments, as was the case in west-central Africa, too, but in the interior of the Bight of Benin the emerging states were more centralized, in part because of the commercial links with other states to their north and in part because of the profits gained from the European trade. The difference was one of degree, but the presence of an Islamic factor, the confinement of Europeans to mercantile activities, and the more developed commercial sector contributed to a setting that was distinct.

The Gold Coast

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the West African slave trade expanded westward from the Bight of Benin to neighboring parts of the coast. Given that European merchants were already stationed on the Gold Coast, it is perhaps logical that the quest for slaves spilled over to this area and indeed to places further west, including the Comoe and Bandama River valleys in eastern Ivory Coast. The Gold Coast – a term used here to include eastern Ivory Coast too – was closer to the Americas; ships could stop at the various European establishments on their way to the better-stocked markets of the “Slave Coast” and return via the Gold Coast if their holds were not filled. All that was necessary was a sufficient supply of slaves. By the early seventeenth century, the Gold Coast was no longer a net importer of slaves; occasionally a few slaves were exported. Nonetheless, slave sales did not become significant until the last three decades of the century. Even then supplies fluctuated wildly, from 2,000 or more slaves in some years during the 1670s to 408 slaves exported between June 1687 and November 1688, a seventeen-month period.⁹

These variations hardly made the Gold Coast a reliable source, but the market for gold sustained European interest and kept ships available for any increase in slave supply. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, moreover, political rivalries on the Gold Coast had provoked a number of wars,

and the resulting turbulence accomplished what market demand had failed to achieve: a steady stream of slaves ready for export. Between 1701 and 1710, more than 80,000 slaves were bought, an average of 8,000 per year, compared with annual departures of more than 13,000 per year from west-central Africa and almost 14,000 per year from neighboring ports on the Bight of Benin. Departures from the Gold Coast reached 11,000 per year from 1721 to 1740, before declining 6,000 per year in the 1740s. Thereafter, the number of departures increased to almost 9,000 per year in the 1750s and reaching a height of 13,500 annually in the 1780s. Most of the people leaving the Gold Coast in the eighteenth century left via Elmina, Cape Coast, or Anomabu, the most important trading fortresses on the Gold Coast, although for a brief period there was no castle at Anomabu, only a ship stationed permanently off the coast. Many of the other castles along the Gold Coast supplied slaves to these principal ports.

The political situation responsible for slave exports was the struggle among the Akan for mastery of the interior, including a region from the Bandama River and its port at Grand Lahou, through the Comoe River and its port at Grand Bassam, as well as the Gold Coast itself. The victor was Asante, which ultimately conquered much of the forest area and several states in the savanna as well.¹⁰ Something on the order of 150,000 slaves came from Grand Lahou and Grand Bassam in the last half of the eighteenth century as the Baule – Akan refugees fleeing the successful Asante armies – displaced the Guro and Senufo who had been living there.¹¹ The trade route north from Grand Lahou to the savanna towns of Boron and Kong, a route that had been opened by Muslim merchants in the seventeenth century but was now cut temporarily by the Baule, may have supplied some slaves from the Muslim traders of the savanna, but most slaves were probably a product of the Baule wars. When the Akan region is treated as a unit, more than a million people were deported in the eighteenth century, and whereas some of these slaves came from the far interior, the great majority appear to have been Akan. Thus we see the slave trade expand westward from the Bight of Benin to the Gold Coast, where a relatively few ports dominated trade at any point in time, and a string of less important trading castles and lagoon-side ports supplied slaves to the leading ports where European ships did most of their business.

The similarities between the Gold Coast interior and the Bight of Benin are readily apparent. Slave exports were closely associated with the emergence of centralized states in both regions. Europeans were confined to coastal establishments and had little direct involvement in the enslavement of people. The Muslim factor was strong, providing commercial connections with the far interior, so that the Akan states were involved in continental trade on a scale that was at least equal to Oyo, Dahomey, and the Kingdom of Benin and was perhaps even greater. Nonetheless, there were important differences that set the Gold Coast apart. First, Akan society was matrilineal, whereas the people of the Slave Coast recognized patrilineal principles of social organization. This difference

affected both the political structure of the state and the institution of slavery. Secondly, the Akan region had major sources of gold – hence the name for the coast – that were absent further east, and the forest area here also had extensive groves of kola-nut trees that produced an essential item of trade with the north. A similar industry did not exist in the interior of the Bight of Benin, although in both regions textile production was an important economic activity.

The Bight of Biafra

A similar process of commercial expansion happened to the east of the Bight of Benin, where the Niger delta and the Cross River valley – often referred to as the Bight of Biafra – also experienced a surge in slave sales.¹² Some slaves were purchased in the Niger delta in the early sixteenth century, but most of these came from the western delta and more properly belong to a discussion of the Bight of Benin. Slaves apparently came from “Gaboe,” which may refer to Aboh on the Niger River. By the late 1670s and 1680s, Elem Kalabari (New Calabar) was supplying “a vast number of slaves, of all sexes and ages.”¹³ Calabar (known at the time as Old Calabar), on the Cross River, was also supplying slaves in the last decades of the seventeenth century.

The expansion of the slave trade in the Bight of Biafra occurred in two phases; in the period from the 1640s through the first decade of the eighteenth century, departures ranged from about 3,000 to 3,500 per year. Thereafter, the number of departures increased rapidly, reaching a peak of 15,000 people per year in the 1780s and 1790s. This rapid increase in the number of slaves almost entirely supplied British ships, which accounted for 85 percent of slave shipments in the Bight of Biafra before abolition in 1807. Ships from Bristol initially accounted for this expansion, but from the 1740s, Liverpool merchants became dominant. The concentration of trade resulted in the movement of Igbo and Ibibio populations to both British colonies in the Americas and to those places to which British trade catered. Initially, Elem Kalabari appears to have been the principal port, but in the period of rapid expansion in the early eighteenth century, Old Calabar became more important and remained a major port until the nineteenth century. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, Bonny emerged as the leading port, eclipsing both rivals. The three ports together accounted for considerably more than 90 percent of people leaving the Bight of Biafra.

Slaves were brought to the coast through the maze of creeks and lagoons that formed the delta of the Niger River and included the mouth of the Cross River. Much of the coastal area was mangrove swamp, very different from other stretches of coast that we have already examined. Large riverboats were used here to transport both slaves and food from the interior, which included some of the most densely populated parts of Africa. Because of the swamps and their unhealthy environment, Europeans did not maintain coastal depots, as was the case on the Gold Coast, in the Bight of Benin, and

in west-central Africa, nor was there direct military intervention comparable to Portuguese adventures in Angola and Kongo. The political structure in the heavily populated forests behind the mangrove swamps was segmented. There were no centralized states on the scale of the other regions, although a loose confederation based on commercial and religious ties and reinforced through the use of mercenaries provided some unity. The political element in enslavement, including wars, tribute payments, and punitive raids, was relatively less significant here, in contrast to the other areas. Instead, slaves were obtained in small-scale raids by one village on another, through extensive kidnapping, and as a result of legal proceedings and religious rites. The degree of decentralization, the relatively late entry into the export trade on a large scale, and the lack of European residence on the coast mark this area off from the rest. Finally, the Islamic factor was also minimal here, although it was not completely absent as it was in west-central Africa. People along the Niger River traded north, thereby having some links, at least through intermediaries, with Muslim merchants, but this trade did not become a factor in the region itself, as it did in the interior of the Slave and Gold Coasts, at least not before the middle of the nineteenth century.

The Upper Guinea Coast and Senegambia

The routes that supplied slaves to far western coasts of the Gulf of Guinea, including the area of modern Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Senegambia basin, were linked with the trade of the interior where Muslims were the main traders. Nonetheless, the coastal people along much of this coast were not Muslims, and many slave exports were unconnected with developments in the interior. The Senegambian basin, where the Islamic factor was strongest, accounted for 1,300 to 2,200 departures per year from the 1670s through the 1720s, reaching highs of 4,400 departures in the 1730s and more than 5,000 annually from the 1750s through the 1780s.¹⁴ Trade from the Futa Jallon highlands where Islam was equally pervasive fluctuated depending on political developments there, and some slaves reached the coast via routes from the interior of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast, where Islamic influence was found.¹⁵ The supply areas for the western coast were the Senegal and Gambia valleys, the Futa Jallon highlands, the kola forests, and the savanna country beyond. One factor in the export figures here was a series of Muslim holy wars that began in the late seventeenth century and continued into the eighteenth, which are discussed later.

The upper Guinea coast supplied very few slaves in the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth century – only a few hundred departures per year in most years. The number of slaves increased substantially in the 1760s, rising to almost 4,200 per year and peaking at 5,000 annually in the 1790s.

Although the trans-Atlantic trade of Senegambia and the upper Guinea coast was relatively small by comparison with the slave trade of the Gold Coast, the

Bights, and west-central Africa, the Atlantic trade still affected the far interior of West Africa more than ever before. Now the pull of the trans-Saharan trade and the Atlantic trade overlapped to a considerable extent. Only in the valleys of the Senegal and Gambia Rivers had the savanna regions supplied both parts of the external trade before the eighteenth century. With the increased demand of the Atlantic trade, people came not only from the interior of Senegambia but also from areas to the north of the Bights of Benin and Biafra. These slaves are often identifiable in modern research because they were Muslims. Some went through Oyo and Asante, and still others traveled along the routes through the kola forests to ports on the western, “windward” coast. Muslims and other slaves from the interior became particularly noticeable on the trade registers of the late eighteenth century, although they appear to account for only a relatively small proportion of the total number of departures from Africa for the Americas.¹⁶

The Volume of the Trade across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean

Approximately 1.3 million slaves were sent across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁷ The trans-Saharan traffic was about 700,000 people per century, which suggests that about 7,000 per year, which may well be too high. A figure of 100,000 for the Red Sea, reflecting an annual average of 1,000 people per year, is allowed for the seventeenth century, and 200,000 departures are assessed for the eighteenth century (Table 3.7). The figures are based on very limited data, but trade across the Red Sea did seem to increase in the eighteenth century. Data are most complete for Egypt in the last decades of the eighteenth century, when an estimated 3,000 to 6,000 slaves arrived each year, but other markets in North Africa also consumed slaves – when the Moroccan sultans wanted slave soldiers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, they looked to sub-Saharan Africa as one source of recruits.¹⁸ Furthermore, the demand for children, young females, and eunuchs appears to have been steady throughout the two centuries.

The East African trade was somewhat more complex. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, slave departures were essentially an extension of the trade across the Red Sea and Sahara. Slaves were destined for harems, domestic service, and government employment. They were dispatched in small numbers, perhaps on the order of 1,000 per year for the whole coast, or 100,000 people from 1600 to 1700. In the eighteenth century, however, new currents affected this maritime trade. Slaves were taken to the Dutch settlement at Cape Town, and the French established plantations in the Mascarene islands in the Indian Ocean. Dwarfed by trans-Atlantic traffic of the time, this trade was related to developments in the Americas, given that some slaves were taken to Brazil, and that Europeans were trying to establish a plantation economy on

TABLE 3.7. *Slave Departures across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, 1600–1800*

	1600–1700	1700–1800
Saharan trade	700,000	700,000
Red Sea	100,000	200,000
East Africa	100,000	400,000
TOTALS	900,000	1,300,000

Sources: Ralph A. Austen, “The trans-Saharan slave trade: a tentative census,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979a), 68; J. M. Filliot, *La Traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1974), 54, 69; Edmond B. Martin and T. C. I. Ryan, “A quantitative assessment of the Arab slave trade of East Africa,” *Kenya Historical Review* 5 (1977), 82; E. A. Alpers, “The French slave trade in East Africa (1721–1810),” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 10:1 (1970), 80–124. It should be noted that the more conservative estimates of Austen’s various calculations have been used here.

the American model in the Indian Ocean. About 115,000 slaves went to the Mascarene islands to grow coffee, indigo, and sugarcane. More than half of these came from Madagascar, with the rest coming from the mainland. The trade reached its height in the last three decades of the century. At this time, the volume of the Islamic sector was on the order of 4,000 to 5,000 people per year, whereas the trade from Kilwa to the Mascarenes moved an average of 2,500 per year between 1786 and 1794. Finally, Mozambique increased its share of the traffic to the Americas; departures rose from almost nothing in the 1770s to an average of 5,400 per year between 1786 and 1794.¹⁹ The East African trade as a whole accounted for the movement of about 400,000 slaves in the eighteenth century. About two-thirds of this total went to traditional markets in the Muslim world, and the remaining third went to the Mascarenes or the Americas.

Demographic Implications of the Export Trade

The export figures can be used as one indication of the scale of slavery within Africa. More than 8.4 million people were exported across the Atlantic from 1600 to 1800, and another 2.3 million were probably exported to the Muslim world across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean in the same period – a total figure that well exceeds 10 million people. Perhaps as many more did not leave, because many slaves died in Africa and others were incorporated into local societies.

Losses from deaths in Africa can be estimated at 6–10 percent at the port of departure and 10–14 percent or more en route to the coast in the last

decades of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century, when most slaves were sent to the Americas. These estimates suggest that the scale of the migration was about 20 percent higher than the figures for arrivals in the Americas would suggest. It is likely the loss of life in the trade to the Muslim world was roughly comparable. There were many people who were not enslaved in raids and wars but were nonetheless casualties of slaving wars, although they cannot be classified as slaves. Deaths at the point of enslavement had a significant impact on the demography of the trade, but there is little information on the scale of such deaths.

Estimates of losses are based on admittedly scattered and incomplete material. Losses at port of departure, for example, can be derived from reports on the Gold Coast in 1678 and the first decade of the eighteenth century, as well as from census data from Angola in the late eighteenth century. Other places and other periods may have been significantly different. The Gold Coast data suggest, nonetheless, that approximately 6–7 percent of slaves brought to the Dutch castle at Cape Coast died or escaped. Between April and December 1678, 1,854 individuals were brought to account at Cape Castle; 1,146 were sold to slave ships; 587 were not sold; and 121 died or escaped. Losses amounted to 6.5 percent of the population. In a 32-month period from September 1701 to April 1704, almost 3,000 people were brought to account: 2,320 were shipped off or employed as castle slaves, whereas 217 slaves died or escaped.²⁰ The remainder awaited shipment. In this case, losses were 7.2 percent of the sample. It is not possible to estimate the relative importance of losses from death and escape, although deaths were probably greater. For Angola, losses were as high as 10–12 percent of those brought to the coast.²¹

Deaths were also common on the march to the embarkation points. Given that journeys varied considerably and the number of deaths increased with distance, an allowance of 10 percent is entirely a guess, although the study of losses at sea lends support to this guess. Miller has shown that many of the slave deaths on the Atlantic crossing occurred during the first part of the ocean journey, which indicates that nutritional factors and diseases contracted on land were probably a more significant cause of shipboard deaths than conditions on the ships themselves.²² This hypothesis accords well with epidemiological studies that show that the incidence of death increases dramatically when people move from one disease environment to another. Those slaves transferred to the coast for export had already experienced this movement between disease environments, and the weakened condition of slaves after long marches – and probably inadequate nourishment in many cases – only intensified the health hazards. European merchants took care to purchase the healthiest and strongest slaves; rejects were presumably sold off in local markets at reduced prices, so that deaths among this segment of the slave-trade population are lost to the record. Even though the strongest individuals were purchased, shipboard deaths that can be attributed to diseases acquired on land still account for a significant proportion of total deaths – perhaps an overwhelming proportion.

TABLE 3.8. *Weighted Mean Ratios of Males and Children Carried in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1663–1809*

	Upper Guinea	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central Africa	All Regions	Number of Slaves
Male Ratios							
1663–1700	0.760	0.581	0.599	0.493	0.609	0.603	49,925
1701–1809	0.661	0.695	0.611	0.570	0.689	0.650	348,055
Child Ratios							
1663–1700	0.054	0.109	0.128	0.110	0.217	0.122	47,378
1701–1809	0.252	0.116	0.169	0.210	0.281	0.227	298,681

Source: David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fluctuations in sex and age ratios in the transatlantic slave trade, 1663–1864," *Economic History Review* 46 (1993), 310.

Since these rates varied from 9 to 15 percent, it seems reasonable to assign a comparable figure for deaths on land that occurred as a result of similar causes. It should be noted, however, that Miller estimates that 40 percent of those purchased in the interior of Angola died before reaching the coast in the six months between initial sale and delivery.²³

The age and sex ratios of the deported slave population were also variables in the population displacement, and these ratios were different for the Islamic and trans-Atlantic sectors.²⁴ In the trade across the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, there was a much higher proportion of females and children, whereas in the trans-Atlantic trade many more slaves were male than female (Table 3.8). Very few individuals in either trade appear to have been older than thirty. These demographic patterns affected the supply areas profoundly. In the areas catering to the Islamic trade, where there was also a strong domestic preference for women and children, the structure of the market consistently reflected a price deferential based on age and sex. Males, unless they were castrated, were usually cheaper. The competition between domestic and foreign markets for females and children raised their prices to levels that were often twice that of males. This market situation had two profound effects on the development of slavery in the domestic economy. First, the lower prices for males made slave labor an attractive investment for slave owners, and consequently male slaves were used extensively in production. Secondly, the drain on the population hit frontier areas most severely. The withdrawal of women and children had a disproportionate impact on small-scale societies, for it limited the ability to achieve demographic stability. The threat of enslavement kept politically weak people in a difficult position, always in danger of extinction. Those with political power mobilized male slaves in production and often military service, too, thereby achieving demographic growth through the incorporation of new slaves.

TABLE 3.9. *Estimated Population of Trade Slaves, 1600–1800*

Category	Exported	Retained or Killed	Total
Females (14–30)	2,130,000	2,700,000	4,830,000
Males (14–30)	3,830,000	1,000,000*	4,830,000
Children (under 14)	1,600,000	4,200,000	5,800,000
Mature adults (over 30)	0	3,860,000	3,860,000
TOTAL	7,560,000	11,760,000	19,320,000

Sources: Table 3.1 for estimated exports across the Atlantic. Ralph A. Austen, “The 19th century Islamic slave trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea coasts): A tentative census,” *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 21–44; Austen, “The Mediterranean Islamic slave trade out of Africa: a tentative census,” in Elizabeth Savage, eds., *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 214–48; José C. Curto, “A quantitative reassessment of the legal Portuguese slave trade from Luanda, Angola, 1710–1830,” *African Economic History* 20 (1992), 1–25; Curto, “The legal Portuguese slave trade from Benguela, Angola, 1730–1828: A quantitative re-appraisal,” *Africa* (São Paulo) 16 (1993), 101–16; Per. O Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society. The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim Press, 1995). The estimated sex ratio of the total population is calculated at 1:1, including 30% children, 20% adults over age 30, and 50% teenagers and adults under 30, in the total population exposed to enslavement. It is assumed that some men were retained as slaves in Africa and that some were able to achieve their freedom through ransoming or other means. It is arbitrarily assumed that one million men who were enslaved did not leave Africa. Of those who did not leave Africa, a significant number were retained in slavery, while many people died during wars and raids associated with enslavement.

The age and sex distribution of the exported population is useful in calculating who the slaves were that remained in Africa.²⁵ The major exporting regions – west-central Africa and the area of the Gold Coast and the Bights of Benin and Biafra – had the highest concentrations of slaves outside Muslim Africa, and a disproportionate number of slaves retained in these areas were women and children. This dimension of the slave trade contributed to the type of slavery prevalent in west-central Africa and along the West African coast, and helps account for some differences between slavery there and slavery in Muslim areas.

The percentage of newly enslaved people who were not exported but retained in Africa can be assessed by reversing the age and sex ratios of exported slaves, although this is attempted here only for the trans-Atlantic sector. Manning has estimated that equal numbers of males and females were enslaved and that the percentage of children (aged thirteen and under), young adults (aged fourteen to thirty) and older people (over thirty) in the enslaved population was 30 percent, 50 percent, and 20 percent respectively.²⁶ If Manning’s assumptions are accepted as a likely indication of the enslaved population, then the export figures only account for a portion, however significant, of the total enslaved population. As demonstrated in Table 3.9, at least as many, if not significantly

more, people stayed in Africa, many of whom were retained as slaves but some of whom died during enslavement or from disease-related causes similar to the deaths of those exported. Nonetheless, Manning's model suggests that approximately almost 12 million people were retained within Africa as slaves or were killed or otherwise died in the process of enslavement and trade. It is obvious that this model is inaccurate in determining the size of the slave population in Africa, for not all males were exported and some slaves over thirty were exported. Despite these reservations, calculations on the size of the female, child, and elderly categories demonstrate that a significant number of slaves must have been kept in Africa and to some extent approximates the total slave population.

If Manning's model is applied to the export trade data, then almost 20 million people, with a normal age and sex distribution, would have had to have been enslaved to enable the departure of 75 million people from 1660 to 1800, with the age and sex distribution of the export sector (see Table 3.9). It assumes that no captives over age thirty were exported and that not all adult and teenage males were exported. The population that stayed in Africa or was killed would have approached 12 million. If proportionately more males were retained or killed, the numbers of young women, children, and mature adults would be proportionally greater. To the extent that males were enslaved in greater numbers because of warfare, or that people were deliberately killed as undesirable captives, these estimates would vary. There were also regional differences; data from the Biafra area show a more balanced age and sex distribution, which suggests that relatively fewer women and children were retained and that a greater percentage of all captives were exported. For other regions, however, this model appears to accord well with local demographic evidence.

Thornton's analysis of the census data from Angola in the 1770s reveals a high proportion of women in the local slave population. The censuses of 1777 and 1778 show that the female population of Angola at least, and possibly the neighboring states of Matamba and Kasanje as well – which were heavily involved in the slave trade – outnumbered the male population by two to one. Because females tended to be undercounted, the ratio may have been even higher. Not only does Thornton's material confirm the data on the sex ratio of the export trade, but it indicates that the societies of west-central Africa were affected significantly. Polygyny was certainly more prevalent than it could have been in earlier periods, before the scale of the export trade was as large as in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Enslavement of Africans, 1600–1800

The growth of the export market, particularly the spectacular surge of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, could not have taken place without a corresponding increase in the ability to enslave people, and, consequently, an intensification of political violence.¹ While this adjustment implies disorder in the social framework wherever the external trade was important, the effective organization of slave supply required that political violence be contained within boundaries that would permit the sale of slaves abroad. The inherent contradiction in this situation was resolved through a separation of the commercial infrastructure from the institutions of enslavement. On the one hand, the disruption in the process of enslavement was associated with political fragmentation. On the other hand, the consolidation of independent commercial networks permitted the movement of slaves within Africa and beyond. Both dimensions were necessary features of the emerging system of slavery in this African context. The export of about 11.7 million slaves from 1500 to 1800, including the astronomical increase between 1650 and 1800 in the Atlantic sector, could not have occurred without the transformation of the African political economy. The articulation of the supply mechanism required the institutionalization of enslavement, which was disruptive (examined in this chapter), and the consolidation of a commercial infrastructure, which was integrative (examined in the next chapter).

A Politically Fragmented Continent

The most pervasive feature of African history in the period from 1600 to 1800 was the inability of military and political leaders to consolidate large areas into centralized states, despite the presence of many small polities. In the sixteenth century, only Songhay and Borno can truly be called empires. The other states of the period were much smaller than these, and large areas had no states at

all. In 1800, there were no large empires, although the number of states as a whole had increased, and the area of stateless societies had been reduced. Political fragmentation accompanied by instability was characteristic of the period. This political environment was well suited for enslaving people.

The savanna region, where Muslim states had long been established, underwent a transformation in the sixteenth century that at first might seem to disprove this generalization. Songhay, for example, extended its boundaries over much of the West African savanna, and its influence reached even further. Undoubtedly it was the largest state in Africa before the nineteenth century, truly an empire on a grand scale. In the Lake Chad basin, Borno also consolidated a large sphere of influence, although not as large as Songhay's. In the upper Nile valley, the Funj Sultanate of Sennar almost achieved similar results, while a Muslim holy war threatened to destroy Christian Ethiopia, thereby consolidating the Ethiopian plateaux into a strong, Islamic state too. Finally, in the interior Zambezi basin, Muanamutapa had united the gold-producing region into a single state. It seemed as if political centralization, not fragmentation, was the order of the day.

All of these achievements promised more than they produced. In 1591, a Moroccan army crossed the Sahara and attacked Songhay. Morocco was not able to consolidate its own rule, nor was Songhay able to expel the invaders. As a result, the vast area that had been controlled by Songhay was thrown into a state of confusion and political instability. Borno actively engaged in slave raiding to finance trade with the Ottoman Empire in North Africa in the dubious hope that a political alliance would legitimize and extend Borno's hegemony south of the Sahara. Such a policy impressed some, but the costs of continuous slave raiding surely undermined Borno's influence in the affected areas and limited the spread of Islam. The Ethiopian *jihad* failed to generate a large state. Instead, a few Muslim principalities were all that were left after Christian Ethiopia regained parts of the highlands, whereas the Funj of Sennar only consolidated an area around the confluence of the Blue Nile and the White Nile. Once more, Muslims were not able to establish large states or empires within the world of Islam, Dar es Salaam. Nor did Muanamutapa, which was connected to the Muslim world through trade, survive; instead it disintegrated into several smaller states.

The general pattern of political disintegration and small-scale states prevailed along the whole Atlantic coast, in precisely those areas where the influence of European demand for slaves, gold, and other commodities was most profound. Kongo collapsed in civil war in the 1660s, after a century of gradual decline. Rivalries along the Guinea shore from the Gold Coast to the Niger delta resulted in the concentration of political power, but states remained small and belligerent. In the interior of the Niger delta and the Cross River, there were not even any states, despite a dense population, extensive trade, and strong cultural similarities. Between 1650 and 1750, several states emerged in this coastal zone: Oyo after 1650, Asante after 1700, and Dahomey after 1724, but these states were never very large. They have often been called "empires,"

but by comparison with the countries of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, with their vast provinces and colonies, they appeared small. Asante, Oyo and Dahomey did not even remotely parallel the wealth and power of Ottoman Turkey, Ming China, Moghul India, or the British, Dutch, French, and Spanish empires.

In this situation of political fragmentation, the characteristic figure was the soldier, who lived as a parasite off the turmoil of the continent. The record of warfare that fills the accounts of past states and rulers may not seem very different from the history of contemporary Europe or Asia, except that here the enslavement of people was the result, and no large states emerged that could provide some semblance of unity and safety. Even the economic and technological developments of the period promoted this political environment. The major technological improvements were in military organization, new food crops, and commercial organization. Guns and breeding horses facilitated the emergence of the soldier as the dominant historical figure. The introduction of new crops from the Americas increased food production and thereby helped maintain population levels despite the export of slaves. Advances in commercial institutions, including credit facilities, currency, bulking, and regularized transportation, assisted in the movement of slaves. Africa remained the poor cousin in the world community, despite its partial incorporation into a global political economy. The continent delivered its people to the plantations and mines of the Americas and to the harems and armies of North Africa and Arabia. The most accurate depiction would characterize this period of African dependency as one of warlordism. Who were the warlords? How did they operate? Why were they successful in their perpetuation of rivalries that effectively placed Africa in a state of retarded economic and political development?

The Muslim Tradition of War and State

Between 1500 and 1800, approximately 3 million people were sold as slaves across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean, which represented approximately 30 percent of the total departures of slaves from Africa. Another million or so were sent to the Americas from Muslim areas in the interior of the Senegambia and the upper Guinea coast, which represented an additional 10 percent of the traffic. Hence the Muslim trade accounts for perhaps as much as 40 percent of the slaves who left Africa between 1500 and 1800. The number of departures during the sixteenth century can largely be attributed to wars of political expansion, whereas the scale of the traffic for the next two centuries primarily resulted from wars of political fragmentation.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the glorious tradition of Islamic empire had been checked; instead, the many small states struggled among themselves to acquire slaves and land. None was successful in creating a new empire, but many slaves changed hands. The three patterns that prevailed in these two centuries included: first, wars between Muslim states and non-Muslim people;

secondly, wars among nominally Muslim governments; and thirdly, Islamic holy wars against established authorities of all kinds. Whether Christian, Muslim, or pagan, all the states of this period augmented the slave population through their military actions, and these states had substantial slave populations themselves. Despite variations, the conception of slavery conformed more or less to the Islamic norm, even in Christian states – most of whose markets and most of whose merchants were, in any case, Muslim.

Local warfare and periodic drought combined to create a cyclical pattern of history that was closely related to the institution of slavery. War and drought, while impeding political and economic expansion, provided a solution to the inherent problem of finding new sources of slaves. The warlords of the savanna seized captives, settling them around their capitals or selling them to merchants. Although some captives were exported from the savanna, the general movement resulted in the concentration of population, at least temporarily. During periods of drought, however, people had to move to save themselves, whether they were slave or free; defeat in war could also lead to a similar flight. This demographic shift replenished lands stripped of people by slave raids and war and made it possible for later warlords to enslave or reenslave people once climatic and political conditions stabilized.

Droughts were common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although, ironically, the period as a whole was relatively wet. As a climatic epoch, however, these two centuries experienced drastic shifts in rainfall conditions that reinforced the cyclical pattern.² The wetter era is apparent in the level of Lake Chad, which was at record highs, and in the vegetation patterns along rivers and lakes, whose remains demonstrate a lush period. The first serious drought struck from 1639 to 1643. It was reported in the Senegambia and Niger bend regions and may have coincided with a period of famine remembered in Borno as *dala dama*. There were other bad years: 1669–1670 in Senegambia; 1676, 1681, and 1685 in the Niger bend; and sometime in the 1690s, perhaps simultaneously with the drought in the Niger bend, at Agades, and possibly in Borno. Drought probably caused a seven-year famine in Borno in the second half of the century. The drought of 1639–1643 in the western Sudan was probably the worst, but it does not seem to have affected the central Sudan or the Nile valley and Ethiopia.³

The climate of the eighteenth century was more dramatic for all regions, there being two and perhaps three major droughts and many localized ones. The first drought appears to have occurred in the middle Niger valley from 1711 to 1716 and was also reported in Borno, where it lasted seven years. The second drought struck in the early 1720s: 1721–1722 in the middle Niger valley and 1723 in the Senegal basin. The most severe drought of the century, and indeed probably the longest and most disastrous one in recorded history, took place in the middle of the eighteenth century. It lasted from 1738 to 1756 in the middle Niger valley; in Senegambia, it was serious from 1747 to 1758; it hit Borno in the 1740s and 1750s. Famine was recorded as far south as the

middle Volta basin, most notably in 1745–1746. The remainder of the century included more droughts: 1770–1771 in the Timbuktu area, 1786 along the Gambia, and the 1790s for the central Sudan. None of these appears to have been as disastrous as the Great Drought of 1738–1756, however.⁴

The population displacement accompanying these droughts was severe. As in periods of political instability, there was opportunity for slaves to escape; sometimes they had to flee. Because most slaves were at the bottom of society, they were often the first to suffer when food became scarce. Furthermore, many people, not just slaves, found themselves in a desperate condition, as traditions from the Senegal River valley demonstrate for the middle of the eighteenth century, when the number of slaves apparently increased as a result of this suffering. Similarly, half the population of Timbuktu reportedly died during the famine accompanying the same drought. Self-enslavement to avoid starvation and the sale of children were both possible at such times.

Wars between Muslims and non-Muslims continued the tradition of militant Islam, which held that enslavement and military action were proper methods of conversion. The political reality of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries conflicted with this ambition, for Islamic governments did not possess the power to subjugate much non-Muslim territory. Consequently, enslavement was conceived as a necessary means of pursuing the same goal. In this period, Borno presented itself as a caliphate, allied to the Ottoman Empire; Sennar pictured itself as the advance guard of Islam, having smashed through the vestiges of Christianity in the upper Nile valley where Christian Nubia and Ethiopia had checked the spread of Islam. Adal continued to harbor hope that its abortive holy war of the previous century could be revived. Other states, including Dar Fur and Wadai between the Nile valley and Lake Chad, pushed forward the frontiers of Islam against pagan populations, and again Islam was used as a rationale for war.

Muslim states organized official slave raids, known as *ghazwa* or *salatiya* in Dar Fur and Sennar.⁵ The Sultan of Sennar appointed an officer to oversee the expeditions there. Each noble organized his own contingent, usually consisting of his private slave army. The Dar Fur sultan issued certificates that designated where raiding parties were allowed, so that competition between units could be minimized. He also placed expeditions under officials, and specific units included volunteers as well as slave soldiers. The Borno armies pillaged the lands to the south of Lake Chad, some raiding into the hill country of Mandara and others sweeping into the plains of the Benue, Shari, and Logone River valleys. These sultans claimed half the booty, which they were then free to dispose of as they saw fit. Some women were placed in harems; some men were drafted into the army; still others were settled on plantations; and the rest were sold. Such organized slave raiding reflected the dependence of the political economy on slavery. Slave catching was a business. For the Sultan of Sennar, it was his second largest source of revenue, after direct taxation of the peasantry.

Christian Ethiopia accepted Portuguese military support to counter this Muslim danger, but the Portuguese alliance proved to be a mixed blessing.⁶ The

Portuguese neutralized Ottoman influence on the Red Sea, thereby isolating Adal and other Muslim sultanates on Ethiopia's flank and assuring Ethiopian independence, but it was necessary to expel the Portuguese, too. Jesuit missionaries were intolerant of local interpretations of Christianity and were forced to leave. Ethiopia then found itself in an unenviable position. With Muslim states on the east and west and the Red Sea trade severely depressed, the Christian monarchy became weaker and weaker. The nobility fought among themselves, employing immigrant Galla nomads in their private armies. The nobles raided for slaves, sometimes against the Muslims and at other times into the pagan lands to the south. When necessary, the monarchy could secure cooperation to check Muslim inroads. Nonetheless, political instability was so pronounced by the last half of the eighteenth century and continuing into the first several decades of the nineteenth century that this period is remembered as the "era of princes" in recognition of the absence of strong central government. Moreover, the economic situation continued to be unfavorable. Some gold, perfume, and other luxuries were exported, but slaves were the most important commodity. And these depended on Muslim markets.

The most serious enemy of Borno was Jukun, a pagan confederation in the Benue River valley. Jukun periodically marched on Borno and the tributary Hausa cities of Katsina and Kano. These attacks were so feared that the defeat of one Jukun force by Borno was celebrated in verse by the seventeenth-century Katsina scholar and poet, Dan Marina:

Ali has triumphed over the heathen, a matchless
triumph in the path of God.
Has he not brought us succour? Verily, but for him
Our hearts had never ceased from dread of the unbelievers.
Narrow had become to us the earth pressed by the foe,
Till Ali saved our children and their children yet unborn.
He drove back to their furthest borders the army of the Jukun,
And God scattered their host disheartened ...
Give thanks again for what our Mai Ali has wrought;
For he has ransomed the whole Sudan from strife.⁷

Jukun stormed Kano, sacking the city, in the seventeenth century, although the walled towns of Borno and Hausaland were usually strong enough to prevent such severe incursions. Slaves were taken, however, no matter whether Muslims or non-Muslims were the aggressors.

Muslim slave raids and pagan counterraids accounted for many slaves in the central Sudan, but by no means all. The Muslim states were often at war with each other, despite the concern in Islamic legal circles over such abuses. Ahmad Bābā, in his 1614 treatise on slavery, specifically condemned the Hausa states for conducting such wars:

Sometimes there is disharmony among the chiefs of these lands and one *sultān* might march against another, and invade his country and capture whatever he can from the other's followers, who are Muslims, and he sells the prisoners although they are free

Muslims. Alas! This is much practised among them. The people of Katsina invade Kano and others do the same although their tongue is one and their language is one their conditions are approximate.⁸

Between 1600 and 1800, the five Hausa states of Gobir, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, and Zazzau fought dozens of wars, sometimes forming alliances and at other times fighting each other directly.⁹ Furthermore, Borno maintained nominal sovereignty over several of these states, collecting tribute or marching its own armies through Hausaland whenever such payments were in arrears. Only at the very end of the eighteenth century were slaves sent from this area to the Guinea coast for shipment to the Americas, and then in relatively small numbers. In general, slaves were marched north across the Sahara or redistributed locally. Nonetheless, the political turmoil of the period and the inability of Borno to transform its hegemony into a strong imperial system once again reflect the general insecurity of the era.

Further west, where the upper Niger and Senegambia basins supplied both the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave markets, the pattern of enslavement was different in two respects. First, the division between Muslim and non-Muslim had become institutionalized. The commercial and religious community was Muslim, whereas many governments were either pagan or only nominally Muslim. Even when some aristocracies were recognized as Muslim, their armies tended not to be. Secondly, Islamic holy war (*jihad*) overthrew some of these states, establishing in their place theocracies in which the association between political power and paganism was broken. In both situations, slave raiding was an important function of the state; only the rationale for enslavement changed. The *jihads* were significant as an inspiration for a new political order, but in the eighteenth century they only perpetuated the general insecurity that prevailed almost everywhere.

One pagan state that was a major supplier of slaves was the Bambara state of Segu, located on the banks of the Niger River and founded in the early seventeenth century in the wake of Songhay's disintegration.¹⁰ Its first ruler, Kalajan Kulubali, attracted a following of young men who ravaged the countryside, sometimes as mercenaries in the employment of petty rulers and at other times as enslavers interested in the profits and glory to be gained from military action. This tradition of raiding was pursued over the generations because local society allowed young men to form hunting associations that were easily adaptable to illegitimate ends. Bands of men would waylay caravans or kidnap children and the occasional farmer in his field. This tradition was carried to its logical extension under the grandson of Kalajan, the noteworthy Mamari Kulubali, whose military career led from raiding to organized warfare. Mamari Kulubali attracted escaped slaves, debtors, criminals, as well as his own age-mates, whose quest for adventure had provided the nucleus of his army. Before Mamari Kulubali died in the mid-1750s, Segu had raided north to Timbuktu, occupying it briefly in 1727, and south to Kong, near the

forest edge. So many slaves were taken in these campaigns that Segu became a major source of slaves for the European slave ships in the Senegambia basin. Incorporated slaves became the largest contingent in the army and the real power behind the throne, so much so that when Mamari's son and successor proved unacceptable to the army, he was assassinated and replaced by a series of more tractable men.

Royal power in such states in Senegambia as Kajoor, Kaymor, and Saalum depended on slave soldiers (*tyeddo*) whose antipathy toward Islam was pronounced. Those soldiers collected taxes and were responsible for many administrative tasks, as well as the fighting. Their heavy drinking, long hair, bright clothing, and arrogance earned the deep hatred of Muslims.¹¹ In these ways, the *tyeddo* of Senegambia were similar to the Bambara warriors of Segu and other states further inland. Indiscriminate enslavement and export of free Muslims to the Americas and across the Sahara frustrated many Muslims. In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this discontent crystallized, as Muslim reformers gathered a following that hoped to establish more orthodox, Islamic states. Neither slave raiding as such nor trade with Christian Europe was criticized, only the sale of free Muslims and the lax practices of political authorities in enforcing Muslim law and tradition.

The new theocracies in Futa Bondu, Futa Toro, and Futa Jallon eliminated some anti-Muslim regimes, but only in the Futa Jallon highlands and along the interior stretch of the Senegal River. Futa Bondu, the first and smallest of these states, produced some slaves, whereas the holy war in the highlands resulted in the enslavement of many people, particularly in the 1740s and again in the 1780s. The pattern repeated itself. Enemies of the new regime were enslaved and sold, unless they were free Muslims. Nonetheless, these Islamic governments, despite their intention of initiating a new political and religious order, contributed to the insecurity of the western Sudan. Enslavement continued to be a function of the state.¹²

Warlords of West-Central Africa

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the main source of slaves for sale to Europeans was west-central Africa, especially the Mbundu lands to the south of Kongo, and the area around Malebo Pool on the Congo River. Of the approximately 2.2 million slaves shipped from Africa to the Americas between 1500 and 1700, almost 60 percent came from that region. In the eighteenth century, some 2.4 million slaves were exported from west-central Africa alone; the total migration from 1500 to 1800 exceeded 3.6 million people.

Where did the people come from? How were they enslaved? The analysis of departures in the preceding chapter demonstrated that three phenomena made the migration possible. The first was the disintegration of the Kongo kingdom, which experienced civil war in the last half of the seventeenth century. Kongo was then a major source of slaves. The second involved Portuguese expeditions

into the interior in an attempt to expand the colony and capture slaves. The third was the rise of Imbangala war bands that operated in the area where the Mbundu lived to the south of Kongo. The trend was toward political instability. Whereas once the kingdom of Kongo had dominated the area, now no central authority could enforce law and order. Instead, the period was one for the warlords, whether they were Kongo nobles, Imbangala chiefs, Portuguese commanders, or new warrior princes farther inland. The common element was the emphasis on war and plunder, and the consequence was enslavement on a massive scale. Without doubt, the majority – perhaps the vast majority – of the 1.3 million people dispatched from west-central Africa between 1500 and 1700 were a product of the interaction between these Imbangala, Kongo, and Portuguese warlords. The eighteenth century required the inclusion of areas farther inland to maintain the level of departures, but this meant that other warlords were added to the list of participants in the campaigns to supply slaves for export.

Although Kongo continued to participate in the slave trade in the first half of the seventeenth century, the state was not the source of slaves that it once had been. In part this resulted from the collapse of the Mpinda-São Thomé trade and the shift of trade to Luanda and the direct export of slaves to the Americas.¹³ But the decline also resulted from the inability of the Kongo nobility to reassert state trading, as Afonso I had once done. The Kongo aristocracy was more interested in incorporating slaves into the retinues and agricultural estates of the capital district and Mbanza Sonyo than it was in capturing slaves for export. Occasionally, nobles raided the peasantry to collect taxes, and these captives were likely to be exported. This was especially so in the 1650s, when such raids appear to have been common. This internal conflict reflected cleavages in Kongo society, which intensified to the point of civil war in the 1660s. The coastal province of Mbanza Sonyo invaded São Salvador, and the entire nobility of the capital district then deserted the city, together with slaves and followers. Those slaves who did not escape were seized and taken to Sonyo. The disintegration of Kongo, with the exception of the victorious province, continued after the desertion of São Salvador, as is evident from the increase in pawning, even in Mbanza Sonyo in the 1680s. The nobility also continued to harass – and enslave – the peasantry. Both pawning and raids on the peasantry demonstrate that nobles and peasants alike were hard pressed in these decades.¹⁴

The new commercial system, which had developed with the founding of the Portuguese colony of Luanda in 1576, was largely confined to the commercial corridor that followed the Kwanza River valley into the interior.¹⁵ In this region, a series of Imbangala warlords roamed the countryside, living off what they could plunder. By 1601, some Imbangala had come into contact with the Portuguese, forming temporary alliances to capture slaves in exchange for imports. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, these arrangements had become permanent, and the Imbangala in effect were transformed into

mercenaries for the Portuguese. Some Imbangala remained in southern Kongo and elsewhere near the coast; others founded states in the interior.¹⁶ These included Kalandula, Kabuku ka Ndonga, and Kasanje.

The Imbangala operated from fortified camps and recruited members through enslavement. Initiates were restricted to uncircumcised males, which effectively meant that only boys were incorporated and trained in the rituals and military techniques of the organization. Circumcised males and women were usually sold to the Portuguese or Dutch, except for those women taken as wives and other captives who were killed. The practices of the Imbangala were designed to terrorize the general population and to encourage the martial skills – valor in war, total loyalty to the leader of the camp, and a denial of kinship relations. These practices included the killing of slaves before battle, cannibalism, and infanticide. The Imbangala based their military superiority on a psychological advantage over the peasantry. They perpetuated customs that were abhorred by most Mbundu farmers. They had no kin. Symbolically and ritually, they renounced human reproduction and kinship, which were at the heart of the lineage-based societies of the Mbundu and Kongo.

Kasanje and Matamba, the most important of these small interior states, maintained a monopoly of the export-import business. That their officials were more than state merchants is revealed in the importance they placed on war and organized slave raids. These activities demonstrate that warlordism remained dominant in the political arena. Kidnapping, raids beyond the borders of the state, and periodic wars indicate a political order that relied on violence and lawlessness. The peasantry was not exempt from this affliction. Periodic levies that had to be paid in slaves were imposed on the lineages. The Matamba and Kasanje warlords wanted to ensure that no challenge to their supremacy could develop. Failure to pay tribute was punished by raids, whereas compliance reduced the number of people in each lineage.¹⁷

Slavery in Kasanje, therefore, was essential to the political and economic structure of the state. Because slaves were regularly sold to Portuguese firms for export to the Americas, all slaves in the state faced the real possibility that they were next on the list. The lineage, knowing that they were subject to tribute payments, kidnapped strangers and organized raids to acquire slaves. When possible, they purchased slaves, for slaves represented an investment against future exactions from the government. The Kasanje rulers maintained the most respected oracle in west-central Africa, so famous that the surrounding Mbundu chiefs sent troublesome rivals and other undesirables to suffer judgment before the Kasanje “great *ndua*.” Guilty defendants, sometimes with their families, were sold into slavery. The Kasanje rulers also weakened rivals within the state by requisitioning slaves from among them – a special tribute that had to be paid to prevent a punitive raid.¹⁸

The turbulence of west-central Africa spread inland further still, ultimately affecting the inner basin of the Zambezi too. From the last decade of the seventeenth century onward, a series of wars erupted and so fed the slave routes to

the coast. These wars were associated with the consolidation of several states, the most important being Luba, Lunda, Kazembe, and Lozi.¹⁹ Luba was probably the first to institute changes that resulted in the emergence of a class of warlords. It was located in the Lomami and Lualaba valleys, from where splinter groups of aristocrats spread to the west and south. One of these imposed itself in the area that became Lunda, centered between Luba and Kasanje and hence well situated to profit from the slave trade to the coast. The ruler of this state, the *mwant yaav*, founded a capital district (*mussumba*) from where Lunda armies raided outward, capturing slaves. In due course, a number of provinces and other small states were established under Lunda warlords, who channeled slaves to the *mussumba*. These dependencies were located throughout the valleys of the Kasai, Kwango, and Luapula and hence dominated most of modern eastern Angola, southern Congo, and northern Zambia. Two of these states became important in their own right. Kazembe, located in the Luapula valley south of Luba and southeast of Lunda, was founded in the 1740s and expanded eastward. By the end of the century, Kazembe was trading with Portuguese and other merchants from the Zambezi valley, as well as sending slaves to Lunda for transshipment to Angola. Hence by this time, the interior supply system of the Lunda and Luba states provided slaves to both the east and west coasts, and probably for the first time a continuous network stretched across this part of Africa. The last state of note, Lozi, was located in the interior flood plains of the Zambezi valley, south of Lunda. Here, too, slaves were available for export to both coasts, although Lozi was more conveniently situated than Luanda as a supply area for Benguela.

The Zambezi corridor to the Indian Ocean was an old route, dating back to the medieval period when gold was the principal export from the interior of south-eastern Africa. In the eighteenth century, gold was still exported, along with some ivory, but slaves commanded an increasingly important share in the value of trade. Slaves brought from Kazembe and Lozi, while demonstrating the links that crossed the continent by the last decades of the eighteenth century, were never a major portion of the Indian Ocean trade; most slaves from Kazembe and Lozi went west. The catchment area for the Indian Ocean was in the Zambezi valley itself and the area around Lake Malawi. Two routes connected the interior with the coast: one down the Zambezi valley to Quelimane or branching overland to Mozambique Island; the other stretching from Lake Malawi to Kilwa. These two routes became a major source of slaves in the 1770s, principally for the French sugar islands in the Indian Ocean.²⁰

The pattern of enslavement in the south-eastern portion of central Africa was similar to that in west-central Africa: Warlords operated on a relatively small scale, collecting slaves from exploited populations and shipping these slaves to the coast. As in Angola, the Portuguese were actively involved in enslavement. Portuguese warlords, whom Isaacman has called *prazeros*, operated as far inland as the commercial center of Zumbo.²¹ Their landed estates, won from the local population and sanctified by the Portuguese crown, served

as bases for slave raiding in the interior. Further north, along an axis connecting Lake Malawi with Kilwa on the coast, local African warlords fulfilled the same function as the *prazeros*. Various Yao warriors in particular emerged as strong men who raided their less well-organized neighbors, although nearer the coast, wars among the Makonde and others accounted for some slaves for export.²² In none of these cases did a large centralized state evolve; the Yao were divided among warlords who rose to prominence for brief periods, and the tenuous links between the *prazeros* and the Portuguese crown hardly qualified as a strong political bond that could provide the basis for a colonial state. South-eastern Africa remained a frontier region in which enslavement was a product of frontier instability.

Whereas Zambezia and the Lake Malawi region provided many of the slaves for the Mascarenes, Madagascar was the source of virtually all the rest. Once again, the development of Madagascar as an exporting region represented a further extension of the slaving frontier. This island, and the Comoro archipelago – located between Madagascar and the mainland – had been involved in the commercial patterns of the Indian Ocean since the medieval period, but the developments of the late eighteenth century were different from the earlier trade.

Various Muslim sultanates controlled the Comoro Islands, and these catered to passing ships in the Indian Ocean until the late eighteenth century, when invasions from Madagascar upset their commercial prosperity.²³ The raids were directed from Sakalava, which, together with Betsimisaraka and Imerina, was locked in a power struggle for control of Madagascar. Until the end of the eighteenth century, Sakalava and Betsimisaraka had succeeded in apportioning most of the island; the rise of Imerina in the central highlands upset this balance of power. Sakalava raided the Comoros, as well as its own frontier on Madagascar, in search of slaves and other booty. The slaves were sold to the French for use in the Mascarenes, and the proceeds were used to buy firearms. The Sakalava even raided the East African coast, including Kilwa. Imerina's rise was based on land-based military expansion and an attempt to capture the French slave-market. Already by the 1790s, Imerina had become the main source of Madagascan slaves in the Mascarenes. The importation of firearms enabled the Imerina aristocracy to continue its imperialist drive to control the island, although Sakalava still maintained its independence in 1800. The Betsimisaraka League had largely lost its autonomy by this time, however.²⁴

Politics of Slave Trading on the West African Coast

Perhaps as many as 4,192,000 slaves were exported from the West African coast in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Table 4.1). Of this number, almost 1.5 million slaves – approximately 35 percent of total West African exports – came from the Bight of Benin. This number of slaves reflected political developments in the interior, including the rise of Oyo in the second half

TABLE 4.1. *West African Slave Departures across the Atlantic, 1650–1800*

Region	Number of Slaves	Percent
Senegambia	445,000	9.5
Upper Guinea	207,000	4.4
Windward Coast	291,000	6.2
Gold Coast	1,121,000	24.0
Bight of Benin	1,545,000	33.1
Bight of Biafra	1,054,000	22.6
West Africa	4,663,000	

Sources: Eltis et al., *Slave Voyage Database*.

of the seventeenth century, emerging as the dominant power in the region, and the power struggle along the coastal lagoons, resulting in the defeat of Allada and the conquests of Dahomey. Another million slaves (24 percent of West African exports) came from the Bight of Biafra, thereby establishing this region as a major source of slaves for the first time. Slaves were exported almost entirely through two ports, Bonny and Old Calabar, and almost entirely on British ships. Moreover, the sudden emergence of this region as a major source of slaves depended on the expansion and consolidation of Aro merchants in the Biafra interior. The Gold Coast was also a significant source of slaves in the eighteenth century. Slightly less than a million slaves (23 percent of West African exports) came from the Akan area along the Gold Coast (including exports that were probably a result of the Baule wars to the west). This traffic reflected the continuing wars among the various Akan states, the destruction of Denkirya and Akwamu, and the emergence of Asante as the dominant power. The stretch of territory where the Akan, Aja, and Yoruba states were the dominant powers, including the areas that experienced wars caused by refugees or other enemies of Oyo and Asante, supplied about 2.4 million slaves, or 58 percent of West African exports. The remainder of slave exports from West Africa, another 750,000 people, came from the long stretch of the western coast as far as Senegambia. These last exports have been discussed in the section on enslavement in Muslim areas.

The vast majority of slaves from the interior of the Bights of Benin, the Gold Coast, and Senegambia were taken in wars. By contrast, those slaves who came from the Niger delta and the Cross River – the Bight of Biafra – had a more varied background, although warfare was also a factor. Instead, raiding, kidnapping, judicial conviction, defaults on pawnship, and religiously sanctioned enslavement were the main sources for their enslavement.

The expansion of Oyo began in the middle of the seventeenth century and is reflected in the export figures for slaves.²⁵ The Oyo aristocracy, composed of the king and a council of nobles, had learned the secret of military success in

the savanna the hard way. The horse had to be the basis of the military. Oyo had suffered defeat at the hands of Nupe, which controlled the Niger River valley in central Nigeria in the early seventeenth century. Forced into exile in the neighboring Bariba states, the Oyo leadership slowly reconstituted its army. Once Oyo reoccupied the district near the Niger, where a fortified capital was built, the king and nobles pursued policies to guarantee access to horses for the cavalry. Oyo established commercial relations with the coastal ports to sell slaves and import cowries, textiles, and other goods. These in turn were used to purchase horses from the north.

Oyo's conquests were along the savanna corridor that stretched from the Niger to the coast. The Yoruba and other people who lived within striking distance of this route were raided, and the prisoners were sold to Europeans. By the last half of the seventeenth century, Oyo controlled much of the territory south of the Moshi River, which was the border with the Bariba states to the north, and east to Igbomina, along the forest-savanna divide through Yoruba country. The whole of the upper Ogun River valley was under Oyo control, as was the region westward to the Opara River, which separated Oyo from Sabe. In the southwest, Oyo had direct control of the northern Egbado and Anago areas. It may well be that parts of southern Bariba and Nupe country were tributary, while Oyo raided southwestward into Allada, Dahomey, and Weme, perhaps receiving tribute from these states too. By the early eighteenth century, Oyo dominated the interior of the Slave Coast.²⁶

Early reports indicate that most of the slaves exported from the Bight of Benin before the middle of the eighteenth century came from a region that stretched from the coast a distance of no more than 200 to 300 km inland, and the ethnic origins of the slaves were largely Aja and Yoruba.²⁷ One reason for this preponderance of coastal people was the struggle for power among the Aja, who vied for position in the trade with Oyo and the north and who attempted unsuccessfully to assert some order in Aja society itself. There were many ports on the coast here: Allada, with its ports of Offra and Jakin, and Hueda, with its port at Ouidah, were the most important from the end of the seventeenth century until the 1720s; Akwamu dominated the coast from Winneba through Accra on the Gold Coast after 1681, and as far east as Ouidah by 1700. Hueda and Allada were well placed to tap the trade north along the natural corridor of savanna country that reached the coast at this point and thereby facilitated travel between the coast and the interior. Akwamu dominated the routes north along the Volta River and also had access to gold supplies, and, because of its expansion eastward, was a factor in the politics of the Slave Coast.²⁸

The emergence of Dahomey inland from Ouidah and Allada and adjacent to Akwamu was both a product of the power struggle on the Slave Coast and contributed to the further export of slaves.²⁹ The area had been subject to raids from the coast, but an enterprising warlord, Agaja, organized a tight military machine, based on firearms, and attacked Allada in 1724 and Hueda in 1727. The immediate cause of the invasions was the efforts of the two coastal states

to tighten their administrative control over the export trade in slaves, thereby reducing the benefits to such inland contributors as Dahomey. By resorting to arms, Dahomey secured control of the ports of Jakin and Ouidah and now, along with Akwamu, dominated the coast.

To maintain its own coastal interests, Oyo intervened in Dahomey between 1726 and 1730, forcing Dahomey to pay tribute as a guarantee that the trade routes would remain open. In 1727, Oyo was still trading at Jakin, but in 1732, Dahomey once again moved on the port, destroying it and thereby endangering its own relationship with Oyo. Despite the tributary status of Dahomey, the Oyo government and principal traders began to develop alternative outlets to the sea. In the 1720s, Epe was one alternative; by the early 1730s, Apa emerged as a port; after 1736, Badagry absorbed the earlier port. In the 1750s, refugees from Allada, which had been destroyed by Dahomey, resettled at Porto Novo, which rapidly became the principal outlet to the coast for Oyo. After the 1760s, Lagos also became active, although it was not important until the nineteenth century.³⁰

Because of this political jockeying, it is no wonder that many of the slave exports in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries came from the immediate interior of the coast. In the peak decades of slave exports from 1690 to 1740, perhaps 80 to 90 percent of those slaves sold on the coast were Aja captives or imported slaves from farther north who had been at least partially acculturated.³¹ Virtually all the rest of the slaves were Yoruba. Without doubt these estimates of ethnic origins are distorted; they probably disguise a higher percentage of Yoruba in particular, and it is likely that at least some slaves were brought from further north.

After the middle of the eighteenth century, the origins of slave exports changed. Whereas Aja and Yoruba still predominated, reflecting the same likelihood as in the earlier period that Aja, Yoruba, and imported slaves who were at least partially acculturated were the majority of exports, now slaves from farther north appear regularly in the registers of slave ships. Those speaking Eastern Voltaic (from the Bariba states and Atakora Mountains), Nupe, and Hausa emerged as identifiable categories of slaves, although their numbers remained small by comparison with the total volume of exports, amounting to about 183,000 slaves for the last half of the eighteenth century. These ethnic labels also implied a more varied background for the slave population, but the presence of these categories suggests that now a significant percentage of exports did not experience a period of acculturation before being sold to Europeans.³² The frontier of enslavement had thus moved inland. This expansion of the catchment area was a logical feature of the large-scale, sustained export of slaves.

This expansion was also directed westward to the Gold Coast, where Akwamu had already participated in the early growth of slave exports through its involvement in the politics of the Slave Coast.³³ Although Akwamu was an Akan state, with its capital, Nyanaoase, located west of the Akwapim Ridge,

its expansion had been directed eastward. Its closest access to the coast was at Winneba, but between 1677 and 1681, several Akwamu armies invaded Accra; thereafter, the European trade castles there became the major outlets for its gold, ivory, and slave exports. By 1700, as previously noted, Akwamu controlled the whole coast as far east as Ouidah. During the next decade or so, as many as fifty to sixty ships stopped at Accra each year, whereas others stopped at lesser points to the east. Given that slaves were also transported along the coastal lagoon to Ouidah, the number of slaves dispatched from Akwamu was probably a considerable portion of total exports from the Bight of Benin–Gold Coast region between 1700 and 1730.

Akwamu also faced west, where there was a power struggle equal in intensity to the struggle in the interior of the Slave Coast. After 1650, Akwamu shared power with many Akan states, the most important of which were Akyem and Denkyira. The main economic goal was control of gold, not slaves.³⁴ Intermittent warfare between these states ended in a stalemate, until a new state, Asante, gradually emerged as the dominant power after 1700. Denkyira and Akyem formed an alliance against Akwamu and Asante, but the destruction of Denkyira in 1701 left Asante free to expand. Other wars followed, now that Asante, Akyem, and Akwamu were the dominant powers, and these accounted for the export of slaves. This power struggle for control of the gold, kola, and slave resources of the region was narrowed further when Akyem defeated Akwamu in 1730.³⁵

Asante's principal campaigns in the north included the conquest of Bono-Mansu, the early Akan state where the old Muslim town of Bighu was located, in 1724, and the invasion of the trans-Volta, resulting in the occupation of eastern Gonja in 1744–1745. These thrusts increased the power of Asante considerably, because slave exports could be used to purchase firearms in preparation for the final defeat of Akyem in 1742. Once Asante had consolidated its position in the south and the northeast, all that remained was the extinction of the remaining independent states, the most important of which was Gyaman in the northwest, defeated in 1746–1747.³⁶ Thus by mid-century, the Akan wars had devastated the region, thereby accounting for most, if not all, of the approximately 375,000 slaves exported from the Gold Coast between 1700 and 1750. The volume of exports was maintained at about this level for the rest of the century, with a notable expansion in the 1780s and 1790s, when Asante attempted to occupy the Fante coast.

In the interior of the Bight of Biafra, the pattern of enslavement was remarkably different from that on the Gold and Slave Coasts. Here, no strong state comparable to Oyo and Asante emerged, but the possibility of political consolidation was there. Like the ports of the Slave Coast and the towns of the Gold Coast, the Bight of Biafra had its commercial centers: Old Calabar on the Cross River, Bonny and Elem Kalabari in the Niger delta, and Aboh on the lower Niger. However, none of these centers was able to transform commercial supremacy into territorial rule, nor did any interior polity try to control

the ports. Even though warlords were present, they usually acted as agents for the merchants. Neither the merchants nor the warriors created a centralized state.³⁷

The most significant development in the interior was the emergence of the Aro as leading merchants supplying slaves to the coast. In origin the Aro claim to be an amalgamation of Ibibio and Igbo settlers who founded the town of Aro Chukwu on the escarpment overlooking the Cross River.³⁸ The earliest settlers – called Akpa – were warriors, suggesting a mercenary role that may have been an early manifestation of the trans-Atlantic trade. They are remembered as coming from the coast and being the first people in the interior to use fire-arms, which in turn suggests a mid-seventeenth-century origin. Aro expansion occurred rapidly in the eighteenth-century, closely associated with the growth in slave exports from the Bight of Biafra after the 1730s. Early Aro settlements in the interior, including those at Afikpo, Ndizuogu, and Ndikelionwu, were initially slave-raiding centers before becoming important market towns in the Aro network.

In the absence of a centralized state, the Aro turned to the manipulation of religious institutions to secure slaves. Their oracle (Ibinukpabi) at Aro Chukwu was directly or indirectly responsible for the transfer of thousands of slaves to European ships waiting at the coastal ports.³⁹ This shrine was respected throughout much of the hinterland as a particularly powerful agent of the supernatural. In fact, the Aro carefully coordinated the oracle with military and commercial institutions they controlled, and thereby monopolized the markets and fairs of the populous Igbo and Ibibio countryside. There was no need for a centralized state with its warlords, tribute payments, and courts. Instead, groups of villages, closely connected through kinship, formed alliances, marital and commercial, with other sets of villages. This local orientation required close cooperation, but friction between communities could erupt in warfare when disputes over marriage, sorcery, or crime were not settled. Tensions were relieved through mediation as well as violence, and it was the role of the oracles and other intermediaries to placate communities and so reduce the level of potential disruption.

The Aro clans inserted themselves into the vacuum that a centralized state could have filled. They negotiated alliances with various sets of villages that allowed them to monopolize trade and establish marketplaces and fairs, and they promoted their oracle as a supreme court of appeal in judicial and religious matters. The oracle itself was widely recognized to speak for the supreme god of the religious pantheon, and as such was respected among the three dominant ethnic groups of the region, the Ijaw of the Niger delta, the Ibibio of the Cross River valley, and the Igbo of the densely populated country astride the lower Niger River. The religious oracle and the commercial network both filled a structural need in the region. The oracle settled disputes and legitimized agreements, in part through divine interpretation of the social order and in part through secular deals based on information supplied by the commercial

network of the Aro traders. The force needed to impose decisions and protect the merchants in their travels was furnished through alliances with other sets of villagers who acted as mercenaries. This loosely structured federation dominated one of the heaviest concentrations of population in Africa.

Slavery was fundamental to the successful operation of this federation. Firstly, slaves were a major item of trade, and the prosperity of the Aro depended on the sale of slaves to European merchants on the coast. Secondly, slaves were used as porters in the trade of the interior, and they farmed the lands of the merchants at Aro Chukwu. Thirdly, enslavement was the ultimate sanction of the oracle, payment often being in slaves. The oracle was even known to seize parties who had humbled themselves before it. Fourthly, failure to respect the decisions of the oracle and physical abuse of Aro merchants and their property were sufficient grounds to expect a lightning raid from the mercenaries. Indeed, these warrior bands enslaved people whenever called on, and the slaves were turned over to the merchants via the oracle.

The manipulation of religious institutions is now obvious. There were many shrines, but only that at Aro Chukwu achieved such renown. Its location at the bottom of a steep hill in the thick jungle of a stream that flowed down the escarpment from Aro Chukwu to the Cross River strategically marked the transfer point from the plateau of Igbo country to the valley of the Ibibio. This stream cut the high terrain where the Aro villages were located, so its secrets were well understood locally but must have seemed awesome to strangers. Plaintiffs who had traveled to Aro Chukwu to face the oracle were housed in one of the Aro villages, paying lodging fees and being filled with stories of the horrible sight that awaited them. Once the visitors descended the slippery hillside, they faced a tall cave on the bank of the stream where the oracle spoke. The opening had been hollowed out to allow for a lining of human skulls, a sufficient warning that the required sacrifices could well include slaves as their victims. The priests informed the terrified delegations why they were there. It was not necessary to plead a case, thanks to the intelligence relayed from Aro merchants, and it certainly was not widely known, if it was known at all, that the slaves “eaten” by the oracle in recognition of the services rendered were easily passed along a path that followed the stream to the Cross River and the waiting ships of the Europeans.

The Dynamics of Slave Supply

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were four patterns in the development of a slave-supply mechanism. Firstly, wars and large-scale slave raiding by centralized states stripped surrounding areas of their population; these states expanded, but in doing so reduced the possibility of acquiring slaves as the enslavement frontier was pushed back. Secondly, wars between neighboring states in which no single state established its ascendancy resulted in the enslavement of people without the necessity of expanding the enslavement

frontier. Thirdly, the spread of lawlessness, as demonstrated in kidnapping and small-scale raiding, led to the random enslavement of people without the creation of depopulated zones. Fourthly, the spread of enslavement as a punishment for convicted criminals, witches, and other miscreants became a means of supplying slaves from within a society, again without affecting the population density in a dramatic way. The sanctions of religious oracles fitted into this category. Structurally, these methods of enslavement affected the demographic profile of particular areas differently.

Individual states could not expand their frontier for enslavement indefinitely. Either the state had to turn to other methods of providing slaves, such as through criminal prosecutions, or it had to abandon its function of enslaving people. This function could be passed on to tribute-paying provinces or to merchants who brought slaves from elsewhere. In west-central Africa, the Imbangala warlords raided for slaves for the first few decades of the seventeenth century; thereafter, the slaving frontier moved inland, until in the eighteenth century the Lunda aristocracy filled the role once occupied by the Imbangala. In the interior of the Slave Coast, Oyo collected slaves through its own raids and political expansion, and this involved the extension of the catchment area for slaves. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, Oyo had shifted from enslaving people to trading for them.

When wars raged between neighboring states over a prolonged period, as they did along the Slave and Gold Coasts during the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, then eventually new slaves had to be imported to restore the demographic balance, or else there was a net loss of population. The internecine wars between the many coastal states on the Slave and Gold Coasts provided a continuous stream of slaves for about five decades; this strife resulted in the enslavement of many people without pushing back the enslavement frontier. Nonetheless, by 1800, the region as a whole was relatively densely populated, in part because Oyo and Asante emerged as the dominant states, checking the population drain, and in part because the exported population was replaced by new slaves brought from further inland.

The erosion of custom through the spread of kidnapping, raiding, and the sentencing of convicted criminals to slavery was another means of solving the slave-supply problem. Organized slave raiding – as distinct from war – and kidnapping both became more prevalent along the West African coast and in west-central Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than in earlier periods. Kidnapping is a small-scale activity, often lost to history, whereas slave raiding is sometimes hard to distinguish from punitive expeditions against recalcitrant subjects or for the harassment of enemies. Nonetheless, both activities are general indicators of a prevailing lawlessness, which the absence of central government made possible.

This political fragmentation had its impact on all walks of life. The times were insecure. The enslavement of people was easy. Without centralized authority that could safeguard personal liberties and property over large areas,

individuals had to face the risks of travel if they wanted to pursue a commercial undertaking, and communities always feared the dangers of war, kidnapping, and raids. In many cases, it is difficult to separate the desire to capture prisoners for slavery from economic and political rivalries not directly related to enslavement.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, warfare was by far the most important source of slaves. The three centuries from the sixteenth through the eighteenth are filled with the rise and fall of states. Some of these have been chronicled earlier to demonstrate their contribution to the slave population.

The problem was not simply one of legality. State violence, either through war or raiding, was usually justified on religious or political grounds. The punishment of criminals, sorcerers, and political opponents was also perceived as a legitimate method of protecting society. Kidnapping was often illegal, but attempts to stop it often failed. Social pressure also prevented many abuses, including the sale of pawns.

Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo slave who was kidnapped in 1756 and was ultimately sold to European slavers, provides a clear picture of the efforts of local people – his father included – to protect people from illegal seizure and sale. The account is particularly important because Equiano's father owned slaves himself and was involved in the enslavement of criminals. Hence this is not the account of an innocent bystander but of an active participant in a society that accepted slavery within clearly defined limits. Equiano came from the west bank of the Niger River, perhaps not too many kilometers from Aboh, the major slave-trading port on the Niger. He remembered that merchants frequently passed through his village:

They always carry slaves through our land; but the strictest account is exacted of their manner of procuring them before they are suffered to pass. Sometimes indeed we sold slaves to them, but they were only prisoners of war, or such among us as had been convicted of kidnapping, or adultery, and some other crime, which we esteemed heinous. This practice of kidnapping induces me to think, that notwithstanding all our strictness, their principal business among us was to trepan [ensnare] our people. I remember too they carried great sacks along with them, which not long after I had an opportunity of fatally seeing applied to that infamous purpose.⁴¹

In this case, of course, Equiano's father was not involved in an investigation of his son's status, and because poor Equiano was traded to a blacksmith and subsequently to Europeans, it is clear that not everyone accepted the responsibility of determining the legality of a slave's status. Nonetheless, the attempt to examine the origins of slaves is instructive. It reflects an attitude that was concerned with the abuses of the slave trade.

There were similar concerns elsewhere. In sixteenth-century Kongo, King Afonso established courts of inquiry designed to investigate illegal enslavement.⁴² He wanted to protect the rights of aristocrats, not enemies of the state or convicted criminals. He knew well that most slave traders were only too ready to buy anyone and ship them to São Thomé as quickly as possible.

Afonso attempted to regulate the trade to control it. The king was not against the trade in principle, and his efforts at monopoly failed because it was easy for local officials and Portuguese merchants to violate the directives of the king. The consequence was not the elimination of illegal enslavement but the greater disintegration of central authority and an increase in slave exports.

The debate over legitimate enslavement also involved Muslims, who traced their right to enslave people back to the Qur'an and other early legal and religious texts. Only Muslims and members of subject groups paying a special tax were exempt from enslavement. Violation of this code was a major preoccupation of such scholars as Ahmad Bābā of Timbuktu. Ahmad Bābā's treatise on legitimate enslavement is an important indication that the question of slavery was a difficult one, but one that involved the attention of the most learned scholars of Muslim society.⁴³ For Ahmed Bābā, neither Muslims nor the subjects of those states that he recognized as Muslim could be enslaved: The cause of slavery is nonbelief, he wrote in 1614.⁴⁴

The basic concern of Ahmad Bābā was shared by other thoughtful Muslims of his day both north and south of the Sahara, and sometimes abuses were corrected. For example, Medicon, a slave from Borno, one of the Islamic lands that Ahmad Bābā specifically mentioned, was freed in North Africa only a few decades after Ahmad Bābā wrote his treatise. The slave, a nephew of the Borno ruler, had been enslaved during civil strife in Borno and was subsequently sold in North Africa. Once he was identified, as a result of his uncle's efforts, he was redeemed from bondage. Despite his illegal enslavement, merchants were unwilling to accept his previous status until forced to do so through royal intervention. Medicon was either redeemed or given his freedom outright, probably in return for some compensation to the master.⁴⁵ South of the Sahara, freeborn captives could be ransomed. This became a lucrative business, so that once again the effort to protect people from the abuses of slavery was undermined.

These attempts to check abuses reveal a strong tradition that tried to limit the worst effects of slavery. Here was a heritage, both Muslim and non-Muslim, that came close to considering the inherent evils of slavery. The questions people were asking related to the efforts to stop the practices of unscrupulous merchants and the activities of thugs. In general, however, these efforts failed. Individual wrongs were rectified, but the debate over enslavement continued. Slavery had become pervasive and morally destructive to many institutions.

This moral battle affected legal procedures, as can be seen in the shift of punishments toward enslavement and away from communal penalties, material compensation to wronged parties, and death to murderers and others convicted of particularly serious crimes. Enslavement increasingly became the most commonly imposed penalty. Francis Moore observed the consequences of this tendency in the Senegambia, where he bought slaves in the 1730s:

Since this Slave Trade has been us'd, all Punishments are changed into Slavery; there being an advantage on such condemnations, they strain for Crimes very hard, in order

to get the Benefit of selling the Criminal. Not only Murder, Theft and Adultery, are punished by selling the Criminal for Slave, but every trifling case is punished in the same manner.⁴⁶

Moore had no moral difficulty in participating in such subversion of custom; like other merchants, it was not in his interest to question slaves about their origins. Similar observations to those of Moore were made elsewhere. Criminals, debtors, and sorcerers were condemned to slavery. This general erosion of society must be understood within its political context. The lack of strong governments that could impose a system of law over a wide area was a serious obstacle in preventing the steady increase in the number of slaves.

The Organization of Slave Marketing, 1600–1800

In contrast to the disunity reflected in the political fragmentation of the continent, the commercial infrastructure that relayed 19,570,000 Africans to the Americas and the Islamic lands between 1600 and 1800 served to integrate the various parts of Africa, if somewhat unevenly, with each other and with the external market.¹ This infrastructure did not handle all African slaves by any means, for many slaves never entered the external market system. Captives seized in wars and raids were often redistributed among the armies responsible for capturing them. They were occasionally presented as gifts to religious shrines or Muslim scholars; girls and women were parcelled out as concubines and wives; young boys were pressed into military training. Nonetheless, merchants bought and sold the millions of slaves who were exported and millions of others who stayed in Africa.

Slaves were a major item of trade almost everywhere that commerce was well developed, particularly in regions where Muslim merchants operated and where European demand was high. Slaves increased in value as they were moved farther from their home country, for the possibility of escape into familiar territory diminished with distance. At the point of capture, slaves were inexpensive, and consequently merchants often lingered around army camps in the hope of buying cheaply and subsequently driving their chattel to distant markets and selling at a better price. The export trade was especially effective in separating slaves from their homes. Captives seized near shipping points were usually deported for this reason; these slaves could be most difficult to manage because of their local origin. Sale to foreign merchants, whether they came from North Africa, Europe, or a distant place within Africa, offered a profitable exchange, even when prices were relatively low. It was better to sell people who knew too much about the area and to replace them with other slaves purchased from the interior.²

Muslim Networks

The Muslim trade can be examined by looking at government agencies, foreign merchants, and local Muslim traders. First, government officials had access to the large number of slaves seized in wars and raids and collected as tribute. The state acted as a bulking agency and often could turn this position to advantage. The movements of private traders could be restricted, and official caravans could be organized to move slaves. Secondly, foreign merchants, particularly from North Africa, Egypt, Arabia, and India, came to African markets to purchase slaves, usually along with commodities that gave them an advantage in local markets. They often dealt directly with government suppliers, advancing goods on credit to be repaid upon the successful completion of military expeditions. Foreign merchants either maintained houses locally or acted through brokers. In both cases, they were a source of credit for other merchants. Thirdly, native Muslims operated throughout the northern savanna, Ethiopia, and the East African coast, sometimes dealing with officials and foreign merchants and sometimes handling the bulking and exportation of slaves on their own. These merchants always invested in a variety of goods, not just slaves, and they could just as well sell slaves within Africa as export them.

The Funj Sultanate of Sennar, in the upper Nile valley, was one government that attempted to monopolize the export trade.³ The Funji organized annual slave caravans to Egypt. This was done most effectively in the seventeenth century, but the practice continued into the next century. These caravans could export as many as a thousand or more slaves in a single year. Private traders also dealt in slaves, but not on the scale of the state. Nor could they coordinate slave raiding with an export-and-import business. Once the royal expeditions to seize captives in the south and west returned to Sennar, the captives were segregated into lots for distribution to the military, settlement on plantations, or export to Egypt. This pattern of state management was also pursued in Dar Fur, Borno, and elsewhere.

In these cases, Muslim merchants had to adjust to the restrictions on marketing. They competed when possible but usually were more involved with trade in goods other than slaves, at least until state monopolies weakened or collapsed. Hence in Borno, which successfully maintained a system of administered trade until the early nineteenth century, foreign merchants were allowed to buy slaves from the government, but the biggest exporters remained state officials who traded both on behalf of the government and on their own account.⁴ Private merchants were relegated to the traffic in salt, textiles, livestock, and foodstuffs. They also imported some slaves, and these could be reexported to North Africa or settled on the estates of the merchants, but such activities were relatively unimportant in comparison with the activities of state officials.

The foreign merchants seeking slaves were mostly Muslims, but not entirely. Those who came from the northern desert oases, such as Ghadames, Tuat,

Murzuk, and Kufra, often acted as middlemen for still other merchants at Tunis, Tripoli, and Cairo. Those from Yemen, Oman, and Egypt might travel directly to Sennar, Ethiopia, or East Africa, and they in turn distributed their slaves throughout Arabia, the Ottoman Empire, or the Indian Ocean basin. The non-Muslims included Jews, who were scattered throughout the Muslim world, and Venetians, Ragusians, Maltese, and other Christians who penetrated the Islamic barrier in small numbers.⁵ There always remained this foreign element, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in the commercial life of the Islamic states of Africa. Some merchants immigrated permanently, married local women, and founded businesses that were passed on to sons. One group of immigrants that deserves special mention because of its long importance and wide dispersion is the *shurfa*, consisting of Muslims who claimed direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad.⁶ From Morocco, they used this claim to forge extensive commercial associations. These immigrants, and others who identified more generally as Arabs, were part of the regular influx of foreigners who proved useful in reinforcing the links between sub-Saharan Africa and the outside world.

The native Muslim merchants were known locally under a variety of names – Juula (Dyula), Jellaba, Swahili, Beriberi, Jabarti – but they shared a common religion, and this association brought with it a legal and commercial heritage that had profound consequences both for the conduct of trade and for the institution of slavery. The commercial legacy included a legal code that carefully explained acceptable practice, provided a system of weights and measures, and recognized that Muslim scholars could arbitrate in cases of commercial dispute. Islamic law forbade interest on loans, which meant that business terms could not directly involve the collection of interest. Hence, goods were advanced on credit, in lieu of future payment, and interest was carefully disguised through differential prices and the manipulation of weights and measures. Clearly, such practices could stretch the intent of the law, but the commercial tradition set limits on behavior, and in so doing, established a common pattern of trade over a very extensive part of Africa.

Juula was the general term for the Muslim trading community that was scattered over much of the western Sudan.⁷ Their identity was based on common origins, mostly Soninke from the sahel country where ancient Ghana had flourished. The requirements of regional markets had resulted in their dispersal and had promoted the emergence of subcommunities. Thus the Jahanke dominated the Senegambia basin and Futa Jallon, the Maraka controlled the commerce of the Bambara states, and the Yarse did the same for the Mossi states. Common surnames such as Ture, Cisse, Kaba, and others helped maintain the social basis for cooperation across these different ethnic communities. Whenever a merchant found himself in a distant market that was not part of his regular network, he usually found someone with the same surname or other connection through whom he could conduct his affairs.

The Juula network could supply the trans-Atlantic market and maintain its share in the trans-Saharan trade. Consequently, this portion of the far-reaching

Muslim system expanded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Juula had plied the routes of the Senegambia for a long time before 1600 and were already operating in the interior of the Gold Coast, and they continued to do so. They also maintained roads through the forests to ports in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast. These routes extended the existing links between the savanna and the northern forest where kola nuts were grown. Now the commerce of this region included the sale of slaves on the coast and the transport of European imports inland.

The operations of the Juula can be glimpsed from the accounts of Mungo Park, who traveled with a slave merchant from Bambara country via the Gambia River valley to the coast. The merchant had purchased thirteen slaves; his consignment was all that was left of a much larger number taken in slave raids by the Bambara army of Segu. They had been kept at Segu in irons for three years before being sold to various merchants from Nyamina, Bamako, and Kangaba. These destinations indicate that slaves were exported in all directions. Some may well have remained in the general area, perhaps sold to nomads from the Sahara, whereas others were exported west to the coast. Eventually, other merchants with an additional twenty-two slaves joined Park's small caravan. As Park observed, these thirty-five slaves were

commonly secured, by putting the right leg of one, and the left of another, into the same pair of fetters. By supporting the fetters with a string, they can walk, though very slowly. Every four slaves are likewise fastened together by the necks, with a strong rope of twisted thongs; and in the night, an additional pair of fetters is put on their hands, and sometimes a light iron chain passed round their necks.⁸

Park's observations demonstrate that merchants fully understood that there was a market for slaves at the coast.

The central savanna had a commercial structure similar to the Juula system.⁹ Merchants from the Bariba states called themselves Wangara, which demonstrated an earlier association with Songhay and ultimately with the gold trade of the Juula. Hausa merchants identified with their city of residence or place of origin, or both. Those who came from Borno called themselves Beriberi, and some Kambarin Beriberi; Katsinawa (from Katsina), Kanawa (from Kano), Gobirawa (from Gobir), and similar designations were also common. Wangarawa was a local adaptation for immigrants from the west, including people connected with the old Songhay network, the Wangara of the Bariba towns, and the more distant Juula. Like the Juula, these traders also supplied both the trans-Saharan and the trans-Atlantic slave markets, although European demand for slaves began to affect the central savanna later than was the case farther west. Muslim merchants, present in Oyo and at the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers in the seventeenth century, apparently reached Ouidah (Whydah) and other ports on the Guinea coast only in the early eighteenth century. Usually, moreover, Muslim traders were confined to the northern markets of Oyo, Asante, and Dahomey, where they sold slaves and other

merchandise and bought European imports, in the case of Oyo and Dahomey, and kola nuts, in the case of Asante. That European merchant occasionally observed Muslims on the coast confirms the importance of their established commercial network in supplying slaves for the trans-Atlantic market and the domestic market of the coastal states.

Muslim merchants dominated the trade routes in the Nile valley and Ethiopia, even where Christian governments were the territorial masters. Jellaba were the Muslim merchants who originally came from Sennar and other centers along the Nile River.¹⁰ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they pushed westward into Dar Fur and Wadai and operated as far as the copper mines south of Dar Fur. They also traded to the Red Sea and to the frontier markets with Ethiopia, and they took slaves to Egypt, where they maintained special quarters for their business. Jabarti traders controlled most of the trade of Ethiopia.¹¹ Christian merchants were legally barred from selling slaves, although it seems that Muslims had a distinct advantage anyway. Jabarti could more easily deal with other Muslims, both at the Red Sea ports and in the neighboring Muslim sultanates south and east of the Christian kingdom. The Jabarti also sold slaves to the Jellaba for reexport to Egypt. Neither the Jellaba nor the Jabarti appear to have expanded their commercial frontiers significantly in this period. Sufficient numbers of slaves could be obtained within the same region that had been tapped for centuries.

Along the East African coast, Swahili and visiting Omani Arabs controlled most of the trade, including slave exports.¹² They operated from a series of ports including Mogadishu on the Somali coast to Mombasa, Pate Lamu, and Kilwa farther south. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, this trade began to expand, and then merchants in the interior, including Yao and Nyamwezi, provided the impetus for this modest growth. As a result of the interaction between these interior people and the coastal Muslims, some Yao and Nyamwezi eventually converted to Islam.

Administered Trade in West-Central Africa

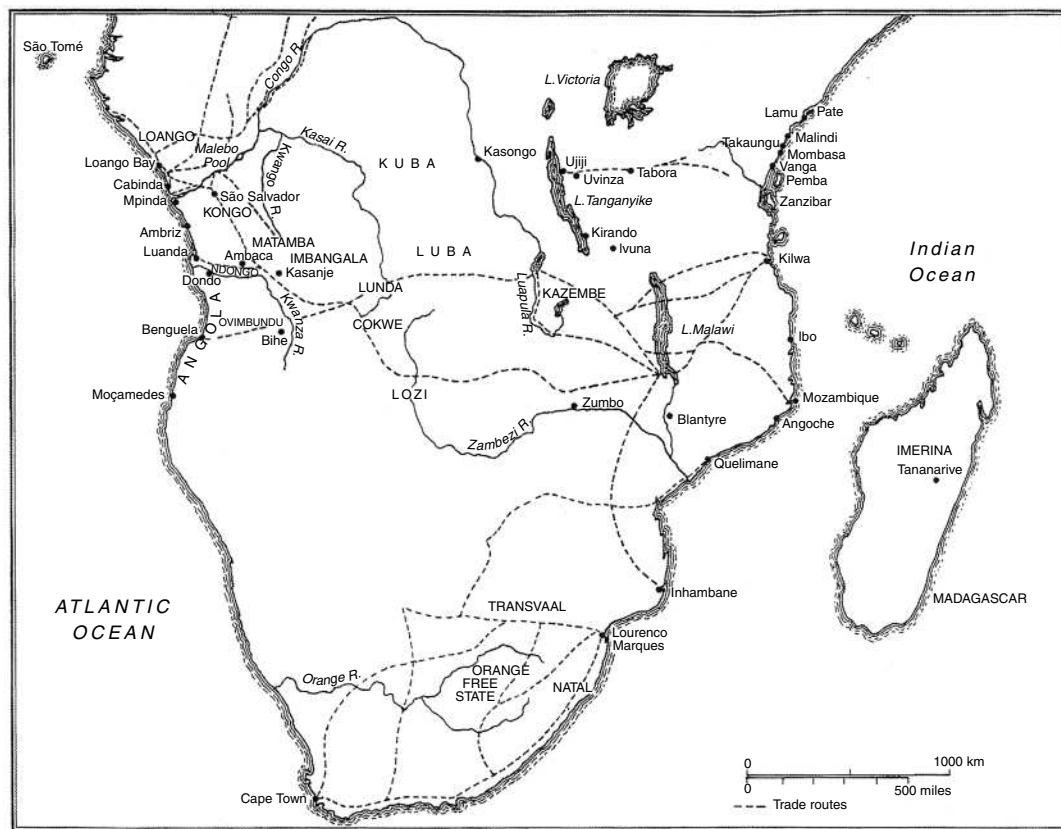
The principal characteristic of trade in west-central Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the attempt by local states, including the Portuguese colony at Luanda, to administer trade and the activities of interlopers who periodically upset these efforts. The long-term effect of these rivalries and attempts at commercial monopoly was a relatively competitive market. Between 1600 and 1800, there developed a complex network of routes and towns that enabled west-central Africa to export an astonishing number of people into slavery.

In the early seventeenth century, Portuguese and their agents (*pombeiros*) dominated the trade of the Angolan coast between Luanda, several lesser ports, and inland markets as far as 300 km behind the coast.¹³ These merchants traveled to Malebo Pool, and they purchased slaves from Imbangala warlords

operating to the south of Kongo. The Portuguese position was temporarily undermined in 1641, when a Dutch expedition occupied Luanda, but when the Dutch were expelled in 1648, the Portuguese reasserted their position. Thereafter the Dutch moved their operations farther north. They established a trade network from Mbanza Sonyo through São Salvador to Ngongo Mbata by the 1650s, and by the same time the Vili of Loango Bay had established contacts through Kongo to Matamba.¹⁴ After 1648, the Portuguese merchants and *pombeiros* controlled the southern routes, extending credit inland. Massangano and Cambambe (Dondo) were interior river ports on the Kwanza River, from where caravans left for the interior. In the eighteenth century, other centers were established farther inland, most notably at Ambaca.¹⁵

Matamba and Kasanje were the most important states in the interior of Luanda in the seventeenth century. The Dutch relied on Matamba in the 1640s for their slave supplies, but with the return of the Portuguese and the defeat of Matamba, Kasanje became the principal state. Matamba – reorganized as Ginga – continued to participate in the trade, only on a reduced scale. Kasanje had been founded in 1618, when Imbangala warriors took advantage of the relatively fertile area at a time when the region as a whole suffered a severe drought. Initially, the Imbangala were primarily interested in raiding for slaves, but after 1650 they profited from the growing trade into the far interior. Kasanje maintained a particularly effective fair (*feira* in Portuguese), organized by the government to restrict the movement of Portuguese merchants. From 1650 to 1800, the Kasanje *feira* remained an important source of slaves. There were other centers too. Slaves came to Luanda from Kongo via Encoje and other areas, and in the eighteenth century, the Ovimbundu plateau became important. In the 1740s and 1750s, Mbailundo was the major slaving power, whereas Bihé coalesced as another source of slaves in the 1760s and 1770s and achieved dominance on the plateau by the 1790s.

The northern coast, which the Portuguese could not control, became the principal market for the Dutch, French, and English, especially after the 1670s.¹⁶ European merchants lacked their own port facilities here, although the Portuguese tried unsuccessfully to establish a permanent base at Cabinda around 1720 and again in 1783. Rather, ship captains were required to deal with local officials at Loango Bay, Malemba, and Cabinda, the three most important harbors. Europeans were allowed to build temporary slave accommodations on shore. Slave prices, duties, and brokerage fees were negotiated with these officials, who also supervised royal brokers who served as intermediaries between Vili merchants and the Europeans. The king also organized royal caravans to Malebo Pool and other places in the interior. Armed guards escorted these caravans to protect them against bandits, to prevent excessive tolls at river crossings, and to forestall slave escapes. These caravans dealt in turn with the Tio merchants who controlled the market at Malebo Pool. This market was the meeting point for merchants traveling down the Congo River, who began to bring slaves to the Pool by at least the middle of the eighteenth century, and



MAP 3. The Commercial Centers of Central Africa in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.

for traders from Matamba and Lunda in the south and east, who sold slaves to Vili merchants traveling overland through Kongo.

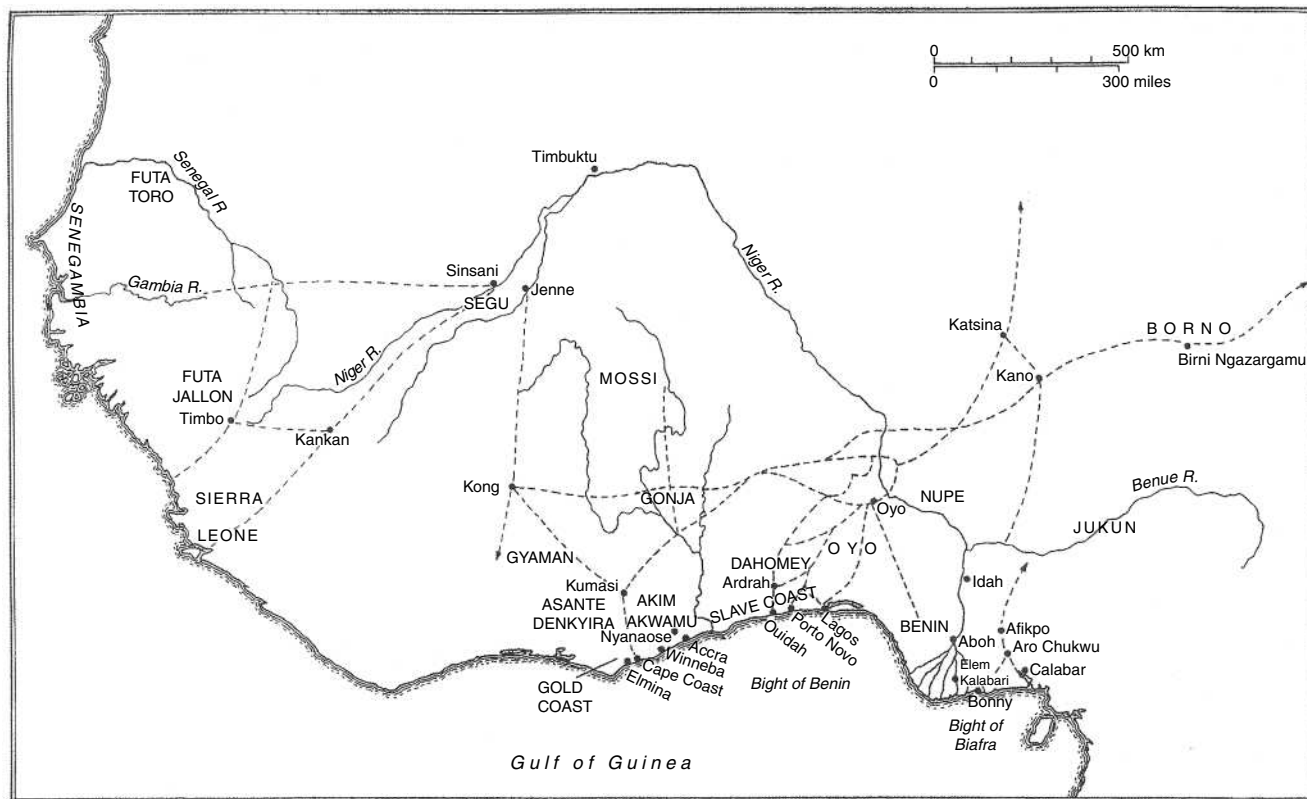
In the far interior, Lunda, Luba, and Kazembe each developed in turn as major sources of slaves. The rulers of these states perpetrated a myth of common allegiance that facilitated the exchange of commodities. Trade was not openly competitive; the various states negotiated bilateral agreements with one another. In this way, slaves, salt, textiles, copper, and other goods changed hands, and ultimately many slaves found their way to the Imbangala fairs and the European ships at Luanda and other ports along the coast. Salt was a crucial item in this exchange, for major sources were found in Imbangala territory or elsewhere near the coast. European imports were also a major item, and again the source was the Imbangala fair.

The center of Lunda trade was the royal district, *mussumba*, where the king (*mwant yaav*) organized slave exports. The trade was tightly administered. Some slaves arrived at the *mussumba* as a result of tribute obligations from outlying districts. More slaves came from other Lunda states that recognized the *mwant yaav* as the senior official of the Lunda state system. The movement of goods, including slaves, textiles, salt, and copper, was arranged through officials. Because these officials pretended that they were kin, the trade was seen as reciprocal gift giving. In theory there was no “market” for slaves or other goods, but in fact this system was comparable to market exchange.¹⁷ In many ways Lunda and its dependencies were similar to Kasanje and Matamba: They all relied on slave raiding and state-controlled trade. The system of the coastal zone had moved inland. As Kasanje and Matamba had become important as intermediaries, Lunda too came to provide slaves through its own administered fairs.

Coastal West Africa: State Trade, River-Boats, and Oracles

The commerce of the West African coast resembled the trade of west-central Africa in two respects: firstly, states attempted to dominate the trade in slaves; secondly, private merchants broke through the government monopolies and established their own marketing arrangements. In both regions, therefore, there was a tendency toward monopoly or oligopoly. Along the West African coast, however, competition between private merchants and government traders had an additional dimension. On the Gold Coast and in the Bight of Benin, state traders were more successful in restricting the marketing of slaves than they were elsewhere, although still not without competition from private traders, whereas on the Bight of Biafra coast, private cartels emerged as the dominant factor, there being no large, centralized states.

Akwamu, Hueda (whose port was Ouidah), Allada, Dahomey, and Oyo – the major states exporting slaves on the “Slave Coast” and the eastern Gold Coast between 1680 and 1730 – were all interested in administering trade through the state. After Akwamu conquered Accra in 1681, for example, Accra



MAP 4. The West African Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century.

merchants were not permitted to reside in the interior; their function was restricted to that of brokerage near the trade castles of the English, Danes, and Dutch.¹⁸ These brokers provided lodging and storage facilities to Akwamu official traders and wealthy merchants from Nyanaoase. Similarly, Hueda and Allada restricted the activities of private merchants; royal attempts to control the trade by forcing inland merchants to deal with officials were a major factor in the Dahomey invasion of both these states in the 1720s. Oyo too intervened to protect its interests; early invasions of Allada and Dahomey guaranteed Oyo access to the ports, but most particularly Oyo forced Dahomey to pay tribute as a measure aimed to guarantee access to the coast.¹⁹ These efforts at state control resulted in the rise and fall of particular ports, as each competed for the export market. Offra and Jakin, the ports of Allada, and Ghehwe (Ouidah), the port of Hueda, gave way to a new order in the second decade of the eighteenth century. Dahomey now controlled the coast, but Apa and Epe to the east were the rivals of Ouidah. By 1736, Badagry was the principal competitor; after the 1750s, Porto Novo was also important.²⁰

Once Asante established its hegemony over the interior of the Gold Coast, these efforts at state management were promoted further, but again never without significant competition from private traders. Whereas in the first half of the eighteenth century, most slaves exported from the Gold Coast were shipped from Akwamu and the Fante coast – that is, eastward from Cape Coast to the Volta River – after mid-century, the trade was concentrated on the Fante coast. Asante operated through two principal outlets on the Fante coast: the English castle (and at times a floating warehouse) at Anomabu and the Dutch post at Kormantin. The Asante dominated the interior trade beyond the market town of Assin Manso, a distance of one day's march from the coast. Fante merchants handled the trade between there and the European castles, importing firearms and other goods that were sold at Assin Manso for slaves.²¹ The medium of exchange was gold, which also continued to be an important export. Another Asante route passed to Elmina and yet another to the coast farther west at Grand Bassam, which was under direct Asante political control and hence was a good outlet as far as state management was concerned. Some slaves also were exported from farther west still at Grand Lahou. Unfortunately for Asante, the Fante coast was commercially more significant because of the availability of gold in greater quantities than at Cape Lahou and Grand Bassam. The value of gold and slave exports has been estimated at roughly the same levels during the last half of the eighteenth century, on the order of 10,000 to 40,000 oz. gold, and slaves valued at as much as 36,000 oz. gold per year.²² Because of the importance of the Fante position, Asante attempted to establish tighter control over the route between Assin Manso and the coast; hence several invasions of the Fante coast in the 1780s and 1790s were aimed at direct administration of the coast itself.

Oyo also intervened openly on the “Slave Coast” in the second half of the eighteenth century. Dahomey was kept tributary, forwarding slaves, cowries,

and other goods to Oyo, but otherwise retaining a competing influence at Ouidah. The Oyo regime of Basorun Gaha (1754–1774), while relying on Ouidah, much as Asante allowed the coastal Fante to handle the last stretch of the Gold Coast trade, began to develop alternative routes to Porto Novo and Badagry. With the restoration of the monarchy under Alafin Abiodun (1774–1789), Oyo policy shifted to even tighter administration. Abiodun colonized a new route to the coast that bypassed Dahomey. A string of towns were settled in the province of Egbado, which enabled caravans to travel to the east of the Kumi Swamp rather than to the west and into the Dahomey sphere.²³ The new port, Porto Novo, expanded rapidly as the outlet for the Egbado route, and although Ouidah continued as a major port, the eastward movement of the slave trade toward Badagry, Porto Novo, and ultimately Lagos demonstrates that Gaha and Abiodun were successful in promoting Oyo's trade. The relative importance of these ports can be gleaned from the list of Portuguese ships visiting the coast between 1760 and 1770: twenty-nine stopped at Ouidah, thirteen at Epe (the beach for Porto Novo), twelve at Porto Novo, fourteen at Badagry, and two at Lagos.²⁴ Eventually Dahomey destroyed Epe (in 1782), Badagry (in 1784), and the inland market of Weme (in 1786), which connected with several of the ports that rivaled Ouidah.²⁵ As a result, the shift of trade to the east of Dahomey was deferred until the nineteenth century.

Coastal governments regulated the sale of slaves to Europeans whenever they could. In doing so they took advantage of the desire of ship captains to set sail as fast as possible. Coastal factors determined prices and negotiated assortments of commodities to be exchanged for slaves. Because the trade along the coast was heavily dependent on credit, often extended in the form of goods that were taken inland to acquire slaves, numerous payments ranging from custom fees to anchorage duties, transport services, and outright bribes were required and had to be added to the sale price for slaves in the accounts of European merchants. These payments, often sanctioned by tradition, demonstrate the success of local merchant-princes and strong governments in regulating the export business.

Although states had an advantage in the slave trade as a consequence of their ability to amass large numbers of captives, private traders also dealt in slaves, and their share of the market often exceeded that of the government and its agents. In Akwamu, for example, private traders supplemented the supply mechanism of the government sector, despite restrictions placed on the merchants of Accra who were confined to an intermediary role. Other merchants, residents of Nyanaoase but not involved in the sale of the captives seized in Akwamu's wars and raids, "are wholesale traders [who] sell slaves to the Europeans for cowries and other goods, and with these buy slaves far in the interior".²⁶

Ship records from two vessels trading at Ouidah late in the eighteenth century provide a breakdown of the relative importance of public and private trading in Dahomey. Of the 660 slaves purchased, only 10 percent were sold by the state, 20–30 percent were sold by large merchants dealing in more than

ten slaves each, 30–50 percent were sold by merchants in lots of three to ten slaves each, and 20 percent were sold by individuals, one or two slaves at a time. When the state's share is adjusted to allow for income derived from taxes and other revenue connected with the trade, the state received about 20 percent of the receipts from the trade.²⁷ It is likely that the government sector was more important than these figures indicate, for private merchants may well have bought slaves from the state prior to the transactions with the European ships. Other slaves still were redistributed in payment for services to the state, and these too could be among the slaves sold at Ouidah. In short, the state sector did not always involve direct sales to Europeans, but even when this is taken into consideration, the share of the private sector was exceedingly large, especially when it is recognized that Dahomey is often used as an example of an economy dominated by the state.

The ethnic origins of slaves from the Bight of Benin also indicate the importance of the private sector. Many, if not most, of the slaves identified as eastern Voltaic, Nupe and Hausa, who numbered at least 183,000, probably came south as trade slaves.²⁸ These groups do not appear in the ledgers in appreciable numbers until the last third of the eighteenth century, although it is likely that other slaves, classified as Aja and Yoruba, were of northern origin too. Even so, the entry of Voltaic, Nupe, and Hausa as visible categories suggests a through trade from the northern savanna to the coast that may not have been as important earlier in the eighteenth century as it was in the last decades of the century.

The interior of the Bight of Biafra was different from other parts of the West African coastal zone. In the interior, there were no centralized states of any consequence and no government trading at all. Even the ports were different, for they were run by the merchants, and commerce remained completely in private hands. The function of local governments in the ports was to regulate trade, not attempt to control it. Both politics and the economy were dominated by a merchant oligopoly.²⁹ At Bonny, the merchant oligopoly deferred to a titled official who was recognized as king by Europeans, but in practical terms, he was no more than a mayor. By contrast, the elite at Old Calabar operated through the Ekpe society, which regulated commerce and imposed fines, often severe, on those not in favor.

Merchants on the rivers and in the Niger delta, particularly from the towns of Bonny, Elem Kalabari, and Calabar, traveled into the interior in large riverboats, some of which were manned by crews of 50 paddlers and could carry as many as 120 people.³⁰ These vessels were heavily armed, because expeditions had to be prepared for conflict with rival firms as well as for trade. Europeans extended credit to the owners of these vessels, who then waited while slaves were purchased and brought to the ports:

The Black Traders of Bonny and Calabar ... come down about once a Fortnight with Slaves; Thursday or Friday is generally their Trading Day. Twenty or Thirty Canoes,

sometimes more and sometimes less, come down at a Time. In each Canoe may be Twenty or Thirty Slaves. The Arms of some of them are tied behind their Backs with Twigs, Canes, Grass Rope, or other Ligaments of the Country; and if they happen to be stronger than common, they are pinioned above the Knee also. In this Situation they are thrown into the Bottom of the Canoe, where they lie in great Pain, and often almost covered with Water. On their landing, they are taken to the Traders Houses, where they are oiled, fed and made up for Sale ... No sickly Slave is ever purchased ... When the Bargain is made they are brought away ... They appear to be very dejected when brought on board. The Men are put into Irons, in which Situation they remain during the whole of the Middle Passage, unless when they are sick.³¹

The delta traders journeyed to one of many riverside markets in the interior, where they were able to buy slaves from the Aro, whose commercial network covered much of Igbo and Ibibio country.³² By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Aro had established control over a series of marketplaces, where they also purchased slaves and sold European imports. These markets were operated on a rotating basis, so that each one was open every four days. The hub of the marketing system was two fairs that lasted four days each and were held twenty-four days apart. The southern one, Bende, connected with the ports on the coast, particularly Bonny, Elem Kalabari, and Old Calabar. The northern one, Uburu, was located at a major inland source of salt and was the focal point of many routes that stretched farther inland and ultimately reached the Benue River valley. Different sections of Aro controlled their own routes and markets. Merchants made arrangements with local people to house visitors and store goods, but the Aro retained a monopoly on certain goods, including slaves, and they regulated the markets.

The network of Aro settlements supplied the Biafra ports. Credit tended to flow inland from the coast; credit was often guaranteed through the use of human pawns as collateral. Both the coastal merchants and the Aro recognized the same regulatory agencies, the most important of which was the Ekpe secret society. Ekpe was a graded male association that the wealthiest and most powerful men in the various ports and market centers dominated through the purchase of titles in the highest grade of the society.³³ Ekpe had the power to enforce decrees and render decisions in civil disputes, including the administration of the death penalty, and hence it was a powerful agency in the regulation of commerce and in guaranteeing the payment of debts.

The other route into the interior of the Bight of Biafra was the Niger River, and here the river ports of Aboh and Idah dominated trade.³⁴ Like the coastal ports, these towns were run by merchants, so that the private activities of merchants could be coordinated to maintain the monopoly of the port. Aboh was situated on the lower stretch of the Niger, just above the point where the delta creeks made it possible for merchants to choose alternative outlets to the sea. Idah was located just to the south of the Niger-Benue confluence and therefore could benefit from trade that was funneled into the lower Niger from both waterways.

Patterns in Restrictive Practices

In general, politics and slave trading were closely associated. Asante, Oyo, Dahomey, the Funj Sultanate, Kasanje, Lunda, and a host of other states tried to manage the slave trade, allowing few, if any, private traders to operate within their domains. There was good reason why governments tried to monopolize slave exporting, given that the states themselves were often the main suppliers of slaves, either through wars, raids, or tribute collection. Consequently, a royal factor managed slave marketing.

The restrictive practices of merchants at strategic commercial centers fitted into this tendency toward monopoly in the slave trade, and in the case of market towns and seaports, merchants often dominated local government.³⁵ Hence official policies promoted the economic interests of the trading community. Again trade and politics were intertwined in a manner to reduce competition, although the primacy of merchants and officials was reversed. Rather than the state controlling trade, the merchants dominated the government. Seen from this perspective, the network of commercial alliances in the interior of the Bight of Biafra – including the towns of Aboh and Idah on the Niger River, Bonny and Old Calabar on the coast, and the Aro communities inland – served to monopolize the slave trade as effectively as Oyo and Asante did. Indeed, the similarity with the Imbangala, Lunda, and their coastal connections is equally striking.

The attempt at monopoly was invariably short-lived for the period from 1600 to 1800 as a whole. Merchants and states tried to confine the trade in slaves and other valuable products to themselves, and they were often successful for a decade or two, sometimes for longer. Queen Nzinga maintained a monopoly in Angola during the 1640s, when the Dutch temporarily occupied Luanda, but when the Portuguese returned, her position collapsed. Kasanje held its royal fair from the 1650s onward, but Portuguese and other merchants repeatedly tried to bypass it. Such examples could be cited almost endlessly.

The tendency toward monopoly, whether through government trading or through merchant arrangements, was matched by a countertendency toward open competition and the rise of interlopers. The same pattern affected the European trading firms. The big chartered companies – the Company of Royal Adventurers, the Royal African Company, and others – or government-sanctioned cartels, such as the merchants who controlled the Portuguese contracts on slave duties – represented attempts to limit the activities of private merchants and the traders of competing nations. These efforts at mercantilism were not startling successes. The Portuguese could usually keep foreign ships away from Luanda, but the Dutch and English traded elsewhere on the Angolan coast and to the north on the Loango coast. Slaves often came from the same interior markets to all these shipping points. The external trade of Oyo followed a similar pattern. The ports serving as the main export points for slaves changed almost every twenty years during the eighteenth century.

The pattern was one of short-term monopolies for relatively small portions of the total export trade in slaves. These either collapsed or merged with larger networks that demonstrated similar oligopolistic tendencies. Profits could be quite high during periods of restricted competition, but alternative sources of slaves usually guaranteed that long-term trends did not result in a sellers' cartel. For this reason, the general picture was one of a relatively unrestricted market situation. There were plenty of slaves available for sale, no matter how rapidly demand increased. Prices fluctuated, of course, depending on local supplies and the immediacy of export demand.

Slaves and Other Commodities

Slaves were always an important item of trade within Africa, for they were an easy commodity to move. They could even carry other goods and food for themselves. Because it was better to transfer slaves to areas with which they were not familiar, trade was an important feature of slavery. By moving people away from their homes and places they knew, their value increased. It is not possible to determine the exact number of slaves who were traded, although the export figures provide some guide to the scale of the internal trade. Nonetheless, slaves were one of the half-dozen or so major items of commerce. As such, they were traded away from the coast and the major export markets as well as toward them. Slaves moved in all directions, although because of the scale of the export trade, it is likely that the net flow was out of Africa in such places as west-central Africa, along the West African coast, and in the areas bordering the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean.

Whereas slaves were the leading export from Africa between 1600 and 1800, in some places, slaves were second to gold and other commodities.³⁶ The Zambezi River valley, Ethiopia, the upper Nile, the Gold Coast, and Senegambia were the most fortunate areas because gold was available. Spices, perfume, ivory, hides and skins, beeswax, and gum arabic were sometimes important. Rice and other produce was also an important commodity of trade for slave ships. For the "Slave Coast," the Bight of Biafra, and west-central Africa, however, slaves were almost the only export. The other goods in which merchants dealt included salt, African textiles, tobacco, livestock, dried fish and other condiments, kola nuts, jewelry, and precious metals, particularly gold, copper, and tin. All these goods were luxuries. Indeed, most long-distance trade in the days of difficult transportation and communication was in luxury items.

Salt was perhaps the most important of these commodities.³⁷ Indeed, it served as money in Ethiopia and west-central Africa, among other places. Large caravans distributed salt from production sites in the Sahara Desert and the Lake Chad basin to areas far to the south, even into the forest. The salt of west-central Africa came from areas relatively close to the coast, so that the sale of salt into the interior followed the same routes that the slaves followed to the coast. The same was true for Ethiopia, for salt came from the coastal plains

along the Red Sea, whereas slaves came from the south where the market for salt was located. Numerous salt pans were found along the Guinea coast, from the Senegambia region through the Bights of Benin and Biafra, so that here, too, salt was shipped inland as slaves were brought to the sea.

The east-west route along the Kwanza valley in west-central Africa was important because salt deposits were located in Kisama, south of the river, which supplied the salt-deficient interior. Kisama salt was used as currency both in Angola and in the hinterland. A regular trade already existed by 1563. Other salt was made at the salt-drying village of Kakwako on the coast; and after 1617, Kasanje controlled the salt-pans on the Kwango River. These last pans had been operated by the Pende before the Imbangala took over.³⁸

Kola, a stimulant chewed as a refreshment, also demonstrated the interconnection between slave trading and general merchandising.³⁹ The kola traded over the greatest distances was grown only in the forests west of the Volta River as far as Sierra Leone and Guinee. This type (*Cola nitida*) was sold to Muslim merchants who came south from the savanna, for Muslims in particular were attracted to this luxury because Islamic custom prohibited the consumption of many other stimulants, as well as alcohol. The presence of Muslim merchants in the kola markets made it possible for them to deal in slaves as well. They often brought salt from the north and purchased gold in markets on the route to the kola centers. Moreover, the operation of these merchants in the kola markets led to the expansion of trade to the coast, where Europeans were buying slaves. Muslims pushed south through the kola forests of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Ivory Coast to the coastal ports in the seventeenth century and continued to be active in the Gold Coast interior as they had been since the Portuguese arrived there in the late fifteenth century. Similar observations on the compatibility of trading in kola nuts and slaves could be made elsewhere, particularly in west-central Africa and the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Here other varieties of kola were consumed, and the distances over which kola was distributed were often considerably less than for the area west of the Volta River, but such commerce took place alongside the trade in slaves.

The Import Trade

What was brought to Africa to buy slaves? It was once thought that liquor, beads, bangles, and similar cheap or economically useless items formed the bulk of imports, but the list of merchandise includes many goods that were relatively high in quality, thereby disproving the myth that Africa got virtually nothing for the export of its sons and daughters. Of course the range of commodities changed over the centuries, and our assessment of the trade as a whole is necessarily impressionistic. In the medieval period, the main imports for the trans-Saharan trade were textiles, copper, breeding horses, and cowries. Some firearms, silver coins, and paper were added to the ledgers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Atlantic trade included cowries, iron bars,

textiles, copper and brass bars and wire, firearms, and glass beads. The types of textiles changed over time. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, at the height of the trade in slaves, most textiles came from India, and British and other manufacturers only began to command a share of this market toward the end of the eighteenth century. Silver coins were also a late-eighteenth-century import.

Goods can be broken down into several categories. The first is money: cowries, silver coins, iron bars, copper and brass wire, and some textiles, which accounted for a third to a half of all imports by value.⁴⁰ This may seem like a strange list, except for the coins, but the economy of Africa used a variety of currencies, and the imported goods contributed to the money supply, even when most of these goods were also used for nonmonetary purposes too.

The most widespread currency zone was that of the cowrie shell, which was used in much of west Africa. Cowries were imported on the Gold Coast, along the Bight of Benin, in the Niger delta, and in the Senegambia basin, even though some of these coastal areas did not use this currency domestically.⁴¹ The cowries that were imported on the Gold and in the Bight of Benin were not only used as currency in Akwamu, Dahomey, and Oyo, but also transported inland to purchase slaves and other goods. In the early eighteenth century, cowrie imports on the "Slave Coast" approached one-third the value of all goods; by the end of the century, the amount still constituted 20 to 25 percent of imports. Manning has estimated that the value of cowries was worth from £50,000 to £75,000 per year at this time; based on a constant inflow and an annual loss of 2 percent of current cowrie stocks, the aggregate money supply approached the value of £4 million. For a population of four million over a region that included Dahomey, Oyo, Nupe, the Bariba states, and the Hausa cities, the per capita money supply was probably on the order of 1 pound sterling, or 8,000 cowries – a figure comparable to the per capita money supply of the early twentieth century.⁴² Manning's calculation indicates a thoroughly monetized economy over this vast region, although it can be assumed that the actual supply of cowries varied within the region as a whole, and some places probably had few or no cowries.

Besides cowries, the Senegambia markets required textiles from India – the "guinée" – that were used locally as money. Narrow strips of cloth circulated in many parts of the interior, sometimes alongside cowries but usually in areas where cowries were not accepted. Of course, the strips could also be made into clothing, but their function as money was essential to the operation of the local economy.⁴³ The strips of cloth were also made locally, and merchants from the Cape Verde islands were heavily involved in the import of textiles for this purpose. Iron bars were sometimes the source of iron money and sometimes not. In the interior of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the Ivory Coast, where kola nuts were grown, small iron implements that looked like hoes were used as money. Most of this iron money was brought from the savanna, to the immediate north of the kola forests, but some was made from the iron bars bought from Europeans.⁴⁴

Copper and brass wire and bars – often in the shape of bracelets called *manillas* – were the medium of exchange in the interior of the Niger delta and Cross River.⁴⁵ These metals were used in local transactions in a region extending as far north as the Benue River, and their only source was from the Atlantic trade.

Even gold was sometimes imported, despite the fact that it was produced in Africa. Both Asante and Dahomey imported gold in the eighteenth century, even though gold came from Asante and Dahomey used cowries. Gold could be stored or used in royal insignia, and because it was accepted by Europeans as money, it continued to have a monetary function that could be tapped whenever necessary, especially to finance the purchase of firearms and other imports from Europe.

The importance of money objects demonstrates that the slave trade was part of a worldwide commercial exchange. Cowries and Indian textiles were shipped from India to Africa via Europe, and indeed many of the ships bringing goods from India came from Indonesia – even farther afield. Cowries come from the Maldiv Islands, 200 km off the west coast of Sri Lanka and southern India, and they were taken to Bengal, for purchase by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch. The Dutch sold them to English and French firms in Amsterdam, whence they found their way to Africa on the ships that sailed out for slaves. Indian textiles followed a similar route, transported to Europe for reexport to Africa.

The import of money was expensive for the economies of Africa.⁴⁶ While the currencies themselves facilitated trade, as money is supposed to do in all economies, it cost valuable export earnings to obtain the money supply, and in the case of earnings derived from the sale of slaves, there was a double loss. On the one hand, slave exports represented a loss in the productive capacity of the deported people. On the other hand, the imported money was not accepted by Europeans as a general-purpose currency, and hence its circulation was limited to localized areas within Africa. The quantity of goods that could be used for productive purposes was restricted accordingly.

Africans could not generate money objects from commodities that were close at hand, except sometimes in the case of locally produced iron objects and textiles, but as is often the case, items that were rare became more important as a source of monetary structures. The problem was that these money objects required the export of valuable commodities, particularly slaves, because some merchants and governments made considerable profits from importing money objects, and they found it in their interest to continue to deal in any commodity that had high profits. There was no centralized authority that could decide to establish some other monetary system, and there was no consciousness that importing money had a cost that might be considered undesirable. Consequently, straight economic laws operated. European and North African merchants sold those goods that commanded a high price relative to their cost. Because the demand for cowries, *manillas*, and *guinéés* was strong, European and North African merchants found it profitable to supply these goods.

A second major import was military wares, especially firearms and ammunition, but also knives, swords, and breeding horses. As with money objects, the antiquity of the trade reaches far back in time. Horses were an early item of the trans-Saharan trade, and they continued to be an important trade item long into the nineteenth century. Imports improved the breed of horses used in the cavalries of many states along the southern side of the Sahara, and these improvements in turn made it possible to breed and sell horses to armies farther south.⁴⁷ Swords and knives – also early imports from North Africa – were often given handles and sheaths south of the Sahara and then sold farther afield. The Atlantic trade also supplied military goods, and whereas some, perhaps many, knives and blades were used for agricultural and other purposes, many were used for military purposes. As with some of the items used as money, there was a double utility for some of these commodities. Firearms could be used in hunting. Even horses had ceremonial functions that were only indirectly related to their military importance.

Firearms were a staple of trade along the West African coast by the early eighteenth century, with as many as 180,000 guns per year imported by 1730.⁴⁸ These guns, which included flintlocks and muskets, continued to be a major item of trade for the British in particular. Between 1750 and the first decade of the nineteenth century, annual shipments for the British alone averaged between 283,000 and 394,000 guns to West Africa. Another 50,000 per year were sent to the Loango coast, north of the Congo River. The size of the trade for other European countries and the quantity of firearms imported into Angola are unknown, which makes a firm assessment of the volume of the gun trade impossible. Nonetheless, at least 20 million guns – an astonishing figure – were sold to African merchants during the course of the Atlantic slave trade. Also, between 1750 and 1807, England sold over 22,000 metric tons of gunpowder, an average of 384,000 kg per year, and in addition supplied another 91,000 kg of lead annually.

The third category of imports was luxuries including textiles, mirrors, needles, liquor, beads, and a variety of other consumer items.⁴⁹ On the “Slave Coast” in the last decades of the eighteenth century, for example, such luxuries were the largest single category of imports. Textiles alone were about one-third of all imports, and here textiles were not used as money. Other luxuries particularly important in the Bight of Benin included alcohol and Brazilian tobacco. Although some imports competed with local manufactures, in general textiles, beads, tobacco, and alcohol supplemented African production. Luxury commodities for the wealthy and powerful were a great stimulus to trade. Liquor consumption and expensive clothing were conspicuous examples, whereas the royal umbrellas of Asante chiefs were symbols of power and prestige that also show this connection.

This assessment of the commercial organization of Africa between 1600 and 1800 shows the close connection with slavery. The monetary sector, although limited, was closely tied to the imported money exchanged for slaves.

Improvements in military technology were also closely connected to external trade. The import of breeding horses across the Sahara strengthened the savanna cavalry states. Chain mail and muskets strengthened them still further. Along the coast, firearms, swords, and knives had a comparable impact, with the effect that has sometimes been called the gun-slave cycle. The simple formulation of this theory holds that guns were sold to Africans to encourage enslavement. Even though some Europeans may have understood the connection between gun sales and slaves, it would be wrong to attribute the slave trade to such manipulation.⁵⁰ The correlation between the quantity of imported guns and the volume of the slave trade more accurately reflected the economic and political choices of African rulers and merchants who acted in their own best interests.

Curtin's analysis of the import and export trade of Senegambia from the 1680s to the 1830s demonstrates that the net barter terms of trade shifted consistently in favor of Senegambia.⁵¹ The cause of this shift was primarily related to a steady increase in the price of slaves; not until the end of the period did falling prices for European goods begin to affect the terms of trade. Although it is not possible to measure accurately the other indicators of economic change in the region, it is clear that it was to the advantage of merchants and political elites, at least, to engage in foreign trade during this era. Information comparable to that supplied by Curtin is not available for other regions along the Atlantic coast for the era of large-scale exports. Nonetheless, it seems likely that Curtin's conclusions apply elsewhere. In Senegambia, slaves were seldom as important in the total volume of exports as they were in the Bights of Benin and Biafra or west-central Africa. Consequently, the net barter terms of trade in these places moved in favor of African exporters to a greater extent than in Senegambia.

The African participants in the external trade included the wealthiest and most powerful merchants and princes. Merchants were found dealing in slaves everywhere that long-distance trade was established; indeed, it is impossible to separate slave marketing from other commodities, either for the internal trade or for the external trade. Government officials found many opportunities to enslave people, supplying captives and criminals to the merchants. These merchants and princes both owned slaves and marketed them – princes because they had access to them through the state apparatus, merchants because their function was to trade. Hence the African elite was committed to slavery; this elite owned the most slaves.

The external slave trade, the process of enslavement, and the use of slaves within Africa were inextricably connected. The economy was profoundly affected, both the monetized sector, dependent on imported money objects, and the nonmarket portions of the economy, based on slave and other dependent relationships. The political order was equally affected, often being mobilized to enslave people in war, through the legal process, or through outright slave raiding.

Relationships of Dependency, 1600–1800

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were a variety of slave regimes in Africa. At one extreme, in many places in the far interior and in isolated spots between the major states and trade corridors, slaves were still marginal to society, forming one category of dependents in kinship systems but ultimately having little structural impact on the local economy or society. Other regions along the Atlantic coast had more slaves, although the outlook toward slavery was still in terms of dependency, even though the impact of the European market provided a situation in which slavery changed. From Sierra Leone in the west to Angola in the south, slavery was transformed as the interaction between enslavement, trade, and slave use influenced the organization of society. In some places, slavery was the basis for a mode of production; in a few areas, this productive system dominated the social formation. Two broad zones emerged: one strongly Islamic in the savanna belt, where there was a continuation and consolidation of earlier patterns of slave use and supply; and a second that was rooted in the tradition of kin-based societies that were now experiencing the transformation to slave societies. A final feature of this continuum of slave regimes was the foundation of European settlements where slave use shared some of the features of slavery in the Americas. These settlements were one bridge between the European-controlled productive regime in the Americas and the African-controlled system of slave supply.

The Expansion of Slavery

The external demand for slaves and the rivalry between African states directly affected the spread of slavery, for both caused tensions that led to the enslavement of people. The economy became dependent on exports to satisfy the personal desires of merchants and rulers and to provide many parts of Africa with a money supply, textiles, firearms, and other goods essential to

the economy and political rule. The fragmented political structure, reinforced by military purchases and the need to acquire slaves to finance imports, was related to a general state of insecurity that facilitated enslavement. These two conditions – the slave market and institutionalized enslavement – set the stage for the course of slavery in Africa.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the number of slaves increased, with the result that many societies experienced a social transformation. This transformation differed in the northern savanna, along the West African coast, and in west-central Africa because the nature of the export trade and other economic factors differed. In the northern savanna, where older patterns of economy and society continued, the transformation had already occurred, and slavery continued to be an important element in production. Women and children were exported in greater numbers than men, even though the domestic market for women and children was greater than for men. This market preference in both the export and domestic spheres meant that the cost of male labor was relatively low, which guaranteed the maintenance of labor supply for agriculture.

Along the West African coast and in west-central Africa (and in scattered spots elsewhere), by contrast, the export market favored young males, so that the domestic preference for women and children and the foreign trade complemented each other. As the rough calculations in Chapter 3 (Table 3.9) demonstrate, the sex and age distribution of the trans-Atlantic trade suggests that a large population of slaves was retained in those African societies associated with the export trade. Furthermore, these estimates suggest that a large proportion of the slave population available for domestic use consisted of mature adults over age thirty, children under age fifteen, and young women aged fifteen to thirty. Indeed, if the assumptions of these calculations are correct (that the newly enslaved population of the interior had a balanced sex and age profile), then the retained population of new slaves was larger than the exported population. Hence the 8.4 million slaves shipped across the Atlantic between 1600 and 1800 provide a rough indication of the scale of slavery within the exporting regions. Although these calculations permit neither an estimate of the size of the domestic slave population nor a comparison of the relative size of slave and free populations, the figures do indicate a steady and substantial influx of slaves into the local societies of the Guinea coast and its hinterland, possibly on a scale that exceeded the inflow of slaves into the societies of the northern savanna. As Thornton has observed for Angola, this demographic shift resulted in the expansion of population in the coastal enclaves and the commercial centers of the immediate interior where political power was concentrated.¹ The same pattern of population growth also occurred in West Africa. Losses were confined to the regions from where slaves came, a demographic shock examined by Manning.²

The influx of servile women, children, and older people reinforced social relationships based on dependency, including those deriving from kinship,

marriage, pawnship, and clientship, but allowing for greater numbers of slaves. Increased stratification meant that the relative importance of these dependent categories shifted. Strongmen, government officials, wealthy merchants, and military leaders controlled large followings of slaves, junior kinsmen, pawns, women, and clients. This group of powerful men formed the nucleus of a class society in which a relatively few people dominated the instruments of warfare, commercial credit, and the means of production. The warlords who enslaved people, whether in political conflicts or slave raids, were committed to the institution of slavery as a means of acquiring people for use in government, the military, and production. These warlords – aristocracies when they consolidated their rule – formed one part of a slave-owning class. The other part was made up of the merchants who traded in many goods but who also performed the vital function of transferring the newly enslaved to their final destinations. As a result of their access to slaves and credit, they too amassed large numbers of servile dependents. Like the warlords, they shared a commitment to slavery, participated in the slave trade, and exploited slave labor. Sometimes the merchants suffered from particular actions of the warlords, including raids on caravans or unstable political conditions that adversely affected trade. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish between merchant-princes and warlords, for merchants could participate in slave raids or fight each other for control of markets and trade routes, and warlords could become actively involved in commerce or production. Furthermore, there were tensions between warlords, not only because of succession disputes but also because of the fragmented political order itself. Nonetheless, there was an identifiable class of slave owners who were those largely responsible for enslaving people, trading them as one more commodity on the market, and employing slaves on their own land for productive purposes.

While these class relationships altered kinship structures, there were still places with less social differentiation where elders coordinated labor, defense, marriage arrangements, credit, and other activities. The basis of social cohesion continued to center on a core of people related through kinship. In these social settings, slavery still functioned in the context of dependency. Slaves were non-kin, but they were absorbed into corporate groups to supplement the number of people in a lineage, thereby circumventing the biological limitations of reproduction. When lineage members could afford to do so, they could augment their numbers by purchase or the extension of credit for pawns. Slavery in this situation was very different from that in the emerging class societies based on slavery. Here a person, slave or free, owed his allegiance to a cooperative group in which mediation and direct involvement in decisions were characteristic, whereas the dependents of warlords and merchants followed the dictates of a lord or trader who gave them orders, no matter what their actual social status.

Despite the polarity of these two modes of production, one based on slavery and the other on kinship, the trend in the two centuries was toward the spread

of slavery, especially in the Muslim savanna, along the West African coast, and in west-central Africa. In some places, such as the Zambezi valley or the “middle belt” between the northern savanna and the forest, these two modes of production existed side by side in relative isolation from each other, except for the warfare and slave raids that brought both into temporary contact. In those places with the greatest concentration of slaves, separate peasant communities maintained social structures based on kinship, even though the dominant relationships in such regions relied on slavery. In large parts of the far interior, including the forest regions of the Congo River basin, the *sudd* region of the upper Nile, and the interlacustrine zone, slavery remained marginal to society. These areas were relatively unaffected by the spread of slavery in this period.

The Northern Savanna

Slavery was widespread in the Muslim states and near Muslim centers in the seventeenth century. Slaves continued to be used in armies, harems, and government administration, where loyalty could be closely developed within institutions that were centuries old.³ Slaves were also employed on plantations wherever merchants and aristocrats had access to large numbers of slaves. In some places, there may have been fewer slaves in 1600 than in 1500, but new developments probably had the net effect of maintaining the number of slaves at about the same level as there had been. As in the medieval period, slavery was associated with the export trade, which has been estimated at 700,000 persons per century, but the volume of this trade was relatively small – usually no more than 1,000 slaves per year for each route. Regional factors, including political rivalries and climatic conditions, generally had a greater influence on slavery than external demand. Only in the far west, where the trans-Atlantic trade and the trans-Saharan trade overlapped, was the external market strong. Even then, total exports from this wide region – Senegambia, inland to Bambara country – seldom exceeded 3,000 to 4,000 slaves per year for both trades until the eighteenth century, when the Atlantic trade alone accounted for as many as 5,200 people in the 1760s.

In theory, the conditions of slavery were supposed to improve over time. The ideological framework, based on adherence to Islam, emphasized the conversion and acculturation of slaves, not only for the many concubines and their freeborn children, but also for children brought up in the family, who might well aspire to freedom themselves. Second-generation slaves fared better than the newly enslaved and normally could expect protection from sale; at least this is what the slave trader Francis Moore found along the Gambia River in the 1730s:

And tho' in some parts of Africa they sell their slaves born in the Family, yet in the River Gambia they think it a very wicked thing, and I never heard of but one that ever sold a Family-Slave, except for such crimes as would have made them to be sold had they been free. If there are many Family Slaves and one of them commits a Crime, the master

cannot sell him without the joint consent of the rest, for if he does, they will all run away, and be protected by the next kingdom to which they fly.⁴

Of course, masters could not guarantee that slaves would not be sold, and it is significant that Moore's account confirms the right of masters to sell slaves, just as his report establishes that public opinion and the expectations of slaves limited the ability to exercise these proprietary rights.

Furthermore, masters could not always protect slaves against reenslavement, which appears to have been a frequent occurrence. The ideological framework continued to protect free men, particularly nobles and devout Muslims, from enslavement, as had been the case since at least the fourteenth century; by implication, this allowed the seizure of slaves, as well as non-Muslims, so that slaves could find that any improvement in their status through acculturation or birth was canceled. Once captured, no matter what their previous status, they were reduced to the level of trade slave, filled with terror of an unknown fate. The importance of reenslavement can be gleaned from the experiences of Mungo Park, who traveled through the western Sudan in the late eighteenth century. In Bambara country, he interviewed thirteen slaves purchased by a Muslim merchant. Eleven of these people had already been slaves at the time they were seized in a Bambara raid.⁵ Even though this sample is small, it demonstrates one of the dangers of slavery in the western Sudan – renewed capture and the risks of death then and later on the road.

The prevalence of slave raiding, warfare, and reenslavement indicates that the proportion of slaves in the population of the northern savanna was high, but there is a lack of detail on slave use during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Still, it is likely that slaves were used extensively in production, particularly in agriculture. Ahmad Bābā's treatise of 1614 is typical of this problem of documentation; he made it clear that enslavement was common, but he reported nothing on the use of slaves.⁶ The warrior class of Senegambia and the Bambara states incorporated slaves, and merchants had access to slaves, who were almost certainly employed as porters, stock boys, and laborers in the fields everywhere that long-distance trade was important.

In the Senegambia, scattered reports suggest that slaves were common in the commercial towns. For example, Richard Jobson, an English slave trader on the Gambia in 1620–1621, found that slaves formed a considerable portion of the population of Sutukho, whose Muslim clerics and merchants traveled throughout the Senegambia region, from the kola forests in the south to the gold deposits of Bure and Bambuhu and probably to the desert edge in the north. Sutukho was apparently typical of many towns along the trade routes of the savanna. Jobson learned that in this Muslim town:

[N]o common people [non-Muslims] have dwelling, except such as are their slaves, that work and labour for them, which slaves they suffer to marry and cherish the race that comes of them, which race remains to them, and their heirs or posterity as perpetuall bond-men, they marry likewise in their owne tribe or kindred, taking no wives but the

daughters of mary-buckles [i.e., Muslims], and all the children they have, are nourished and bred up, unto the ceremonies of their fathers.⁷

Jobson clearly identifies slavery as an inherited status, and although he provides little information on the organization of slave labor, it is likely that slaves worked in the fields. The availability of slaves for export across the Sahara and on the upper Guinea coast helps confirm this possibility.

Similarly, the traditions of the Borno kings contain numerous references to raids on the pagan region to the south of Lake Chad, and despite the trade across the Sahara, many of these captives stayed in Borno. Mai Ali, who ruled in the middle of the seventeenth century, engaged in massive campaigns, according to a *mahram* written in 1658, seizing as many as 4,000 slaves in a single expedition. Ali distributed slaves to the learned Muslims of his court; how many and for what purpose are not known, but even if the actual figure cannot be accepted as anything more than an indication of large-scale, organized plunder, the implication is clear that enough slaves were available for use in productive activities.⁸ Certainly a few were used in administration; others were pressed into military service; and women were placed in harems. It is likely that others were settled in villages.

The Kano *sarki*, Kutumbi (c. 1623–1648), is remembered as a great slaver; his military officials were responsible for wars and raids that netted thousands of slaves. Some of these were settled around Kano, including those at one place where the spoils of a single raid – reputedly 500 slaves – were concentrated. One of Kutumbi's generals apparently settled other captives at his headquarters at Ganjuwa, at least if his ability to forward to Kano some 2,000 slaves, whom he had seized in raids to the southeast, perhaps attacking Jukun, is any indication of his capacity to amass slaves. In building the town of Ganjuwa, he almost certainly relied on some of these captives.⁹

In the Funj Sultanate of Sennar, Badi II (1644–1681) established a defensive network around his capital, where slaves were settled to farm the land and act as militia in case of an invasion.¹⁰ The original population of these settlements was supplemented by purchased slaves and new captives in the course of the next 150 years; by 1773, the slave population numbered 14,000 people. Their military importance was in fact marginal, because the men only had short javelins and shields, making them virtually no match for heavily armed cavalry that was the basis of Sennar's power, as well as of most savanna states. The settlements were far more important as a source of agricultural produce than for defense.

The neighboring state of Dar Fur instituted similar policies during its period of imperial expansion in the eighteenth century. Sultans Tayrāb (1752–1785) and 'Abd al-Rahmān (1785–1801) settled slaves on agricultural estates near their capitals, at Dar Fongoro, and on Jabal Marra and its foothills. Tayrāb brought many slaves to his first capital, Shoba, and later settled more slaves at Ril. Many of these slaves were Turuj Nuba who were seized in the Daju Hills of Kordofan; those settled at Ril joined other Daju already living there. 'Abd al-Rahmān also relied on Nuba slaves from Kordofan for his agricultural

enterprises. These slaves, known collectively as ‘*abidiyya*, were scattered in communities of various sizes throughout Dar Fur. The sultan appointed officials to administer these holdings, which produced food used by the army and the palace. Some communities had special functions other than agricultural work, including the manufacture of padded horse armor. Others were the homes of specialist military units. Some nobles may have had as many as 500 to 600 slaves on their estates.¹¹

The link between enslavement, trade, and the use of slaves in production is clearly established for Futa Jallon in the eighteenth century. The establishment of this theocracy in the 1720s revolutionized the economy of this highland region. Tens of thousands of slaves were settled on plantations to supply the army and facilitate caravan traffic between the coast and the interior. These plantations belonged to merchants and the new Fulbe aristocracy, with the largest of these belonging to the Fulbe. Some idea of their importance can be gleaned from the account of Muhammad Kaba Saghanughu, whose father, a merchant, had a plantation at Bouka, a short distance from Timbo, the capital of Futa Jallon. Kaba’s father was a “substantial yeoman, possessing 140 slaves, several [herds of] cows and horses, and grounds producing quantities of cotton, rice and provisions, which he exchanged for European and other commodities brought from the coast by the Higglers merchants.”¹² Kaba was seized by highwaymen in about 1777 and sold to Jamaica. His account makes it clear that plantations of considerable size were owned by commoners in Futa Jallon, for his “mandingo parentage” set him apart from the Fulbe aristocracy that controlled Futa Jallon and owned most slaves. These holdings were substantial, amassed in such a relatively short time that there were several slave revolts in the last two decades of the eighteenth century. Even after these uprisings were crushed, tension remained high. When this situation is considered in the context of the export trade to the Americas, which Kaba experienced along with tens of thousands of other people, it becomes clear that the effort to pacify the highlands and resettle the countryside with plantation slaves indeed transformed the social formation of the highlands.¹³

The *jihad* of Futa Jallon reflected economic and social pressures mounting elsewhere in West Africa, probably as a consequence of the periodic droughts. Fulbe cattle herders became more common than ever before, founding villages that served as bases for their seasonal migrations in search of pasture and water. The establishment of Fulbe government in the Futa Jallon highlands successfully repeated the earlier revolt in Futa Bondu (1690s); other Fulbe did the same in Futa Toro in the 1770s.¹⁴ Fulbe pastoralists also appear to have become more numerous in Masina, south of the Niger bend, in the eighteenth century too, although they did not stage a revolution there. Nonetheless, their migratory patterns made them less susceptible to the mid-eighteenth-century drought; they could move their herds far to the south during bad times, and upon their return they often found whole areas deserted of population. In the central Sudan, which suffered less from these droughts than other parts of the

savanna, Fulbe immigrants inserted themselves into peasant society, moving about the countryside supplying cattle and goats to local markets in return for grain and manufactures. During the dry season, they could graze their herds on the fields; farmers often paid the Fulbe because of the manure left behind.¹⁵

This type of livestock management proved to be tremendously successful. The relative proportion of Fulbe in the population appears to have increased everywhere across the West African savanna, whereas other pastoralists, including various Arab tribes, moved westward into the Lake Chad basin and the border areas of Sennar and Dar Fur. Some herders bought slaves, and, near the Hausa towns of the central Sudan, Fulbe masters established whole villages of slaves.¹⁶ Such settlements served as wet-season camps for the nomads, and some of the biggest slave owners and clan chiefs established relatively fixed transhumant patterns for their herds. These slave masters had different interests from those of the merchant class and aristocracies. Ethnic tensions and occupational specialization prevented the consolidation of a unified slave-owning class, and these divisive factors were often more important than class conflict between slaves and masters.

The information on a slave mode of production is scattered and often circumstantial for the savanna in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Court eunuchs, slave officials, and concubines are more visible in the historical record than field slaves, salt workers, and gold miners. Consequently, it is not possible to determine the relative importance of slave production, tribute collection, raiding, and trade to the incomes of the dominant classes. The effect of slavery is clear, however. Enslavement was a major function of government. This meant that individuals were safer when they were attached to nobles than when they were not. Enslavement was a form of social control; it was a highly exploitative method of population redistribution. Slavery permeated society, promoting other types of dependency as a means of security. Clientage was perhaps most important in the states and commercial towns of the savanna and southern Sahara. People attached themselves to a patron, working for him or fighting for him. Such quasi-feudal relationships were a by-product of slavery; failure to participate in such dependent relationships involved great risk.

The West African Coast and its Interior

It stands to reason that an area capable exporting at least 4.5 million slaves from the early seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century must have had a significant proportion of slaves in the local population. There were already many slaves in the interior of the Gold Coast by 1600; there were many more there and elsewhere along the Guinea coast soon after. By the middle of the seventeenth century, slavery was common on the Sierra Leone coast and in the Yoruba and Dahomey region in the Bight of Benin. Several decades later, and especially by the middle of the eighteenth century, the interior country behind the Niger delta and Cross River estuary experienced the

same trend. There were major differences between these areas that affected slavery. Firstly, the Akan area was matrilineal, whereas the other regions were patrilineal; hence inheritance rights and marital customs varied. Secondly, centralized states amassed large numbers of slaves in the interior of the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin, whereas in the Bight of Biafra interior and Sierra Leone, the absence of centralized states prevented the emergence of this sector (except Futa Jallon in the northern interior of Sierra Leone after the 1720s). Thirdly, there were major economic differences related to the availability of local resources. Nonetheless, the similarities in the institution of slavery over this area were strong: Slaves were killed at funerals and sacrificed at religious occasions and state functions. Slaves were also seen as kinless dependents who could be incorporated into domestic groups, and they were a valuable asset that could be sold if circumstances warranted such action.

In the coastal region west of the Gold Coast, slavery was more important as a means of acquiring dependents than as the basis of a productive system, except at relatively isolated port settlements. At Grand Bassam and Grand Lahou, for example, the volume of trade probably enabled some local merchants to employ slaves in agriculture and as porters and canoemen.¹⁷ Along the rivers of Sierra Leone, where there were no centralized states of any size, individual merchants also increased the size of their slave holdings in accordance with their success in business. Among the Vai, for example, Dapper found that slaves were inherited in the 1620s, but even during the height of the slave trade from this stretch of coast, European merchants could never obtain more than ten to fifteen slaves at any place on the coast, which suggests that holdings were relatively small.¹⁸ Still, slaves were common among the Vai. The same was true for the Sherbro; for example, slaves probably did most of the heavy farming for those families involved in hunting, fishing, salt making, and commerce. The salt region of Tasso had numerous slave villages in the early nineteenth century, although it is unclear how old these settlements were and when the concentration of slaves in them began. Almost certainly, however, the main development of these plantations occurred in the second half of the seventeenth or the eighteenth century. Such trading families as the Caulkers, descended from the English agent Thomas Corker of the Royal African Company, stationed on the Sherbro coast in 1684, were important merchants in the eighteenth century, and their access to slaves made it possible to employ many in agriculture.¹⁹

In the interior of the Gold Coast, one of the principal functions of slaves was working the gold deposits.²⁰ As early as the 1620s, Samuel Brun observed that the coastal Akan "have numerous slaves looking for gold in the sand near our fortress.... On one occasion, I found a good fifty slaves at the sea side looking for gold in the sand."²¹ In the 1670s, in the area near the future capital of Asante:

The Accasseers, assuming many difficulties and risks, have the veins of gold in the mines explored to a considerable depth. They use all manner of instruments: huge iron hoes, baskets and strong ropes, not just to dig steps and galleries in the ground, but also to

retrieve the gold found there. They tell as well how very often a large number of slaves disappear in the mine shafts because of cavein.²²

In the 1690s, Tilleman reported that:

The gold is dug out of the soil by the slaves of these Acaniers [Akan].... When digging for it no notice is taken of any visible gold in the dug-up soil, but this soil is taken by the slaves in large wooden dishes and made into large heaps by the nearest water [for panning]. In the dominions of Petu, Sabu and Commendo, several hundreds of slaves are often to be seen seeking for gold ... on the beach.²³

The practice of using slaves in gold production continued under Asante. The risk of death in the pits was considerable because of the environment and relatively low level of technology. The rainy season left the ground damp for months, thereby increasing the danger of cave-ins. This risk was perhaps a major reason why custom forbade the Akan from mining gold themselves. Custom sanctified the exploitation of slave labor, and because the gold industry was so important to the local economy, both before the rise of Asante and after, the use of slaves in production marked a fundamental shift in the organization of the social formation.

Slaves were used in other productive activities too, sometimes on a large scale comparable to that occasionally found in gold mining. In Akwamu, for example, the “great caboceers” – who included government officials, nobility, and merchants – owned many slaves. When Tilleman visited the capital, Nyanaoase, in 1695, he found that plantations surrounded the city, and most of the workers on these plantations were slaves and pawns. These “caboceers” – *abirempon* in Akwamu – were an urban class; they had armed retainers who were used to enforce tribute collection in the provinces and who sometimes engaged in raids and war for their masters. Individuals might have hundreds of such retainers as well as other dependents, relatives, clients, servants, and slaves. The plantation slaves and pawns were settled outside the capital and almost nowhere else in the state, in part because they were needed to provision the large establishments in Nyanaoase and in part because the *abirempon* preferred to live at the capital. The plantations also raised crops that were sent to the coast to buy fish and salt; some produce was sold to European forts and slave ships.²⁴

Asante too developed a slave-based plantation sector, again concentrated around the capital, Kumasi. Information on the origins of this sector is lacking, but accounts from the second decade of the nineteenth century suggest that the settlement of slaves in the vicinity of Kumasi had begun in the middle of the eighteenth century, if not a few decades earlier.²⁵ Slaves lived in their own villages away from Kumasi, and their labor provided most of the foodstuffs needed to supply the army and large households of the aristocracy. It seems likely that similar concentrations of slaves were found around the capitals of other Akan states, including Denkyira, before it was destroyed c. 1701, and Akyem before

it fell in 1742. Similarly, the commercial towns of the forest-savanna frontier probably had a plantation sector as well. Muslim merchants were located at Bighu (destroyed in the 1720s), Nkoranza, Gbuipe, and Kafaba, among other places, and if the nineteenth-century successors to these commercial centers are any indication of past practice, then slave-based agriculture was vital to the provisioning of the caravan trade.²⁶ As Asante conquered these towns, this commercial network was reorganized. Individual plantations and towns were eliminated, but the continued importance of the Muslim sector suggests that the relationship between slavery and trade was maintained.

At the towns on the Gold Coast itself, slavery was also widespread, and the functions slaves fulfilled were similar to those of the interior. The coastal merchants used male slaves as armed retainers, porters in the trade with the interior, crew on boats, and agricultural workers. Many slave women were taken as wives, and they also labored in the fields. Indeed, wealthy men on the Gold Coast conceived of their status in terms of the number of their slaves and children, as the Dutch merchant L. F. Romer observed in 1740: "A Negro only has his children and slaves, that is what riches consist of.... His children and slaves are really his wealth, his power and protection; the more he possesses, the more he is esteemed."²⁷ Slaves were bought or seized outright. Children were the product of polygamous marriages that were arranged through the manipulation of legal pawnship or the purchase of slave women. Their children were recognized as legally free – that is, they were not supposed to be sold – but they lacked kinship affiliation with their master-father's kin for at least another generation until time and intermarriage blurred slave origins. Slavery enabled merchants to acquire dependents who could be incorporated into their establishments, but unless they were loyal and trustworthy, they could be sold, sacrificed, or exported.

The rationale for slavery differed between matrilineal and patrilineal societies, but the results were the same. It is easy to see why men wanted slaves in patrilineal societies: Slaves were the personal property of the owner, with no responsibilities to his kin. In matrilineal societies, slavery was also a means of bypassing kinship obligations. Among the Akan, whose society was structured through the female side of the family, kinship was a powerful organizing principle that tied men to their sisters and maternal uncles.²⁸ They did not pass their wealth on to their children if those children were the offspring of a free woman who had lineage connections. Indeed, a man's children by a free wife had stronger economic and social ties to the wife's family. Slaves bypassed these restrictions and enabled wealthy men to establish large households that were dependent on them and not some larger kinship unit. Slave women in particular were valuable, for they lacked kin, and the children they bore had only a loyalty to their father's family. Other slaves had the same relationship. There were no obligations that existed outside those for the master. Hence a man could depend on their labor and cooperation, because they had nowhere else to turn.

Except for the metropolitan districts of Akwamu, Asante, and other states and the commercial towns of the coasts and far interior, slavery was relatively unimportant; slaves supplemented existing labor in small holdings based primarily on kinship obligations. This peasant sector paid tax to the state and was subject to harassment from officials and their slave retainers. Occasionally, individuals emerged as small merchants, gold producers, or kola exporters, but inheritance customs and death taxes usually prevented the consolidation of a prosperous rural elite. Either entrepreneurs moved to the commercial and political centers, or their activities remained relatively small scale.

Oyo used slaves extensively in administrative and military capacities, which this state could afford to do, considering the role it played in the export of slaves to the Americas. The king (*alafin*) had a large staff of slaves who resided in the palace and adjacent compounds. These probably numbered several thousand in the first half of the eighteenth century and consisted of three categories. Eunuchs were one. Some guarded the king's wives and children; there were also three senior eunuchs who were responsible for judicial, religious, and administrative matters, respectively. The second category of royal slaves was the *ilari*, designated as such because their heads were shaven and they were given special face and body scars. They served as the king's bodyguard, royal messengers, and tax collectors. There were several hundred of both sexes and they had their own officers. The third category of royal slaves included large numbers of individuals with administrative and ritual functions. This system appears to have developed gradually, reaching its zenith before 1754 and the *coup d'état* of Basorun Gaha. Gaha dismantled the royal administration and substituted one of his own, probably relying on his own slaves. After he was assassinated in 1774, Alafin Abiodun (d. 1789) reestablished the royal slave system.²⁹

This administrative structure relied on provincial slave officials, known as *ajele*, who were appointed to administer specific towns and were responsible directly to the king. These officials in turn required the services of numerous slave subordinates, including tax collectors, customs officials, and messengers. The *ajele* system was particularly important in governing the province of Egbado, through which the main route to the coast passed after 1770. Slaves were also a central feature of the military. Besides the personal bodyguard of the king, slaves dominated the cavalry, which was the backbone of Oyo power. Hausa and Nupe slaves tended the horses and staffed much of the cavalry force. Because of environmental factors, the breeding of large and strong mounts for the military was not possible in Oyo country. Horses had to come from the north, just as the experts in horse care did. In addition, many retainers of the military officials were slaves who often came from the north.³⁰

Oyo's military slaves received special privileges because of their position – they had the responsibility for the enslavement of other people. But they were not assimilated; they remained apart as Muslims and nonnatives. Indeed, their allegiance to Islam was indirectly promoted, for religion gave them status in a society based on the kinship ties they lacked. For many slaves, therefore,

identification with Islam became a feature of slavery. This did not imply exploitation, but it enhanced recognition as dependents.

Slave owners in the interior of the Bight of Benin also used slaves in productive activities, at least in Dahomey, which was a province of Oyo after 1726. William Snelgrave, a slave trader familiar with Dahomey in 1726–1727, provides one of the few glimpses of the economic exploitation of slaves, which he associates with other aspects of Dahomey slavery:

It has been the Custom among the Negroes, time out of Mind, and it is so to this day, for them to make Slaves of all Captives they take in War. Now, before they had an Opportunity of selling them to white People, they were often obliged to kill great Multitudes, when they had taken more than they could well employ in their own Plantations, for fear they should rebel, and endanger their Masters safety.³¹

Snelgrave's account established the connection between three dimensions of slavery in Dahomey, including the execution of slaves, criminals, and prisoners at state functions, the sale of slaves to Europeans for export to the Americas, and the employment of slaves in agriculture in the domestic economy. The state executions and the export trade were effective methods of controlling the domestic slave population.

Unfortunately, the earliest substantial knowledge of the slave population at the Oyo capital comes from 1830, only a few years before the final collapse of the Oyo state. At that time, it was estimated that two-thirds of the people in the city were slaves, and it is highly likely that many of these were farmers and craftsmen. This situation probably dated from the eighteenth century, if not earlier still.³²

In the interior of the Bight of Biafra, from where more than 900,000 slaves came in the period from 1700 to 1800, many families had slaves, as Olaudah Equiano's account from the middle of the eighteenth century makes clear. Equiano's father had slaves in his household, and Equiano's generalizations about slavery suggest that slaves were common. Equiano himself, after he had the misfortune of being kidnapped, worked as a blacksmith's apprentice. Then he was sold to European merchants and eventually became a plantation slave in the Americas. His comparison of his experiences is instructive:

Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed we kept as slaves: but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West-Indies? With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their master. Their food, clothing, and lodging, were nearly the same as theirs, except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free born; and there were scarce any other difference between them than a superior degree of importance which the head of a family possesses in our state, and that authority which, as such, he exercises over every part of his household. Some of these slaves have even slaves under them as their own property and for their own use.³³

Equiano was aware, however, that justice was not always served in his native land, not only because he had been kidnapped, but also because his father had

been involved in legal cases that indicate that illegal enslavement had become a serious problem. Indeed, slave merchants were customarily questioned to determine the legality of their merchandise. Only prisoners of war and criminals convicted of kidnapping, adultery, and murder were considered legitimate slaves, but merchants often carried large sacks to hide their wares, a heinous practice that Equiano experienced when he found himself inside one.

Equiano's comparison of Igbo and American slavery presents the obvious contrasts between small-scale domestic slavery and plantation slavery; inadvertently, Equiano attests to the contribution of slaves to production in his homeland. Slaves did the same work as "other members of the community, even their masters," which would involve agricultural labor, crafts, trade, and domestic chores. That this work was "no more" than what free people did cannot be accepted without qualification, however. Equiano left his country at the age of ten or eleven; his memory may well have been clouded by a romantic image of Africa and the influence of the British abolitionists who were his patrons. Nonetheless, the details of slavery – the possibility that slaves could own slaves and the social distance maintained between free persons and slaves – indicate a social formation in which slavery was common.

Other than Equiano's brief account of the employment of slaves in production, there is simply little information to examine. The Aro settlements at Ikelionwu (Ndienu cluster) and Ndizuogu were founded by slaves.³⁴ Aro traditions do not reveal the functions of slavery; they suggest that the founders were commercial agents, but it is likely that slaves were employed in menial tasks and that tradition has emphasized the possibility of social mobility and commercial success rather than agricultural work and head portage, in which most slaves were probably employed. In the Niger delta, slaves were involved in economic activities too. They were needed to man the large riverboats that were already operating between Bonny, Elem Kalabari, and Old Calabar and the riverside markets of the interior. The Igala, Aboh, and Ossamari traders on the Niger River also had large boats, and they too probably used at least some slaves.³⁵

The types of slaves that were common in Equiano's time included funeral victims, cult devotees (*osu*), and other persons dedicated to nonproductive and noncommercial uses. Secret societies and titled societies that wealthy and influential men (and sometimes women) joined sometimes required the sacrifice of slaves; at least, this was the practice in the nineteenth century, and there is no reason to suppose that conditions were not the same in the eighteenth century, if not earlier still. *Osu* were slaves dedicated to shrines and could not be sold because they no longer had a human master. Funerals were considered a time to display wealth through sacrifice; the killing of slaves was later a particularly conspicuous display, although horses imported from the savanna were also used, along with other valuable objects. Other nonproductive uses of slaves included the sacrifice of slaves to deities, such as to the salt-making gods at Uburu, the most important inland source of salt and the site of one major Aro fair.³⁶

Despite the gaps in the documentation for the Biafra interior – and indeed for other places too – the historical trend is clear. A mode of production based on slavery emerged on some parts of the West African coast. Among the Akan, this mode of production antedated the development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade; gold production, head portage, and agricultural employment for slaves long preceded the boom in slave exports in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The external trade reinforced and encouraged the expansion of a slave mode of production, but the American market did not cause it. Along the upper Guinea coast and in the Bight of Benin, there appears to have been a direct correspondence between the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the consolidation of a slave mode of production. Oyo, Dahomey, Allada, and other states struggled to exploit the possibilities of the export trade, and in the process slave masters employed their slaves in domestic production, apparently on an increasing scale. Along the upper Guinea coast, local merchant-princes emerged who used slave labor to advantage too, and the rise of Futa Jallon was closely associated with slavery. By contrast, in the Bight of Biafra, the interaction between enslavement, trade, and production only began to achieve a level of integration that can be equated with a mode of production based on slavery, and then only in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Slavery in West-Central Africa

Although slaves were used in agriculture, commerce, and other economic activities in west-central Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the social formation there was different from that of the northern savanna and the West African coast. A mode of production based on slavery can be identified, but the size of the export trade – perhaps 1,135,000 slaves in the seventeenth century and more than 2,365,000 people in the eighteenth century – demonstrates that west-central Africa remained primarily a supplier of slaves for sale to the Americas. In general, the export trade drained population from the productive sectors, concentrating slaves in some areas, often in connection with the export trade. The supply mechanism thereby influenced the expansion of a slave mode of production. So many slaves were exported that slavery assumed an importance similar to that in West Africa and the northern savanna. Slaves were used in the production of food, in portage, and in other sectors of the economy.

Slavery was closely associated with the export sector and its supply network. Slaves were most numerous along the routes into the interior – Mbanza Sonyo to São Salvador in Kongo, Luanda to Kasanje and Matamba, the Loango coast to Malebo Pool on the Congo River, and Benguela to Bihé (in the eighteenth century). While these routes and the various routes that intersected with these points prospered, the size of the slave population increased; when political and economic conditions deteriorated, the slave population stabilized or declined.

Wherever slaves formed a substantial proportion of the population, their labor was an important component in production.

The concentration of slaves around São Salvador and Mbanza Sonyo in Kongo continued for the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century, even though the slave trade through the Kongo port of Mpinda declined with the collapse of the Kongo-São Thomé commercial axis. A belt of slave estates extended outward for a radius of 35 km around these two centers; the population of the capital district was between 60,000 and 70,000 people, most of whom were slaves whose agricultural labor supported the residents in São Salvador, which had about 9,000 to 12,000 people, comprised of nobles and their slave retainers. The population of the coastal district of Mbanza Sonyo was somewhat less but still had a substantial proportion of slaves.³⁷ The 1648 report of Giovanni Francesco da Roma, a Capuchin priest, makes it clear that the nobles were pre-occupied with managing a slave society. The slave population was sometimes difficult to control, and the hegemony of the large slave owners depended on keeping their plantation slaves and armed retainers divided.³⁸ As in the sixteenth century, the two urban districts were not typical of the rest of Kongo, which was less densely populated by small peasant communities of related kin. Nonetheless, one-third of the population lived near the two centers, and since the peasant lineages owned some slaves, it is possible that the total slave population of Kongo was more than 100,000, perhaps slightly less than the free population.³⁹ The peasant and slave sectors were linked, moreover, for the state used enslavement as a political weapon. Whereas most slaves – both those dispatched from Kongo and those settled at São Salvador and Mbanza Sonyo – came from farther inland, some slaves, at least, were Kongo peasants who had failed to pay taxes or who had committed some action used to justify enslavement, as the reports of Giacinto Brugiotti in the 1650s make clear.⁴⁰

In the 1660s, civil war tore Kongo apart and effectively reversed the role slavery had been playing in the state, at least in the capital district. The Sonyo army sacked São Salvador in 1666, seizing many slaves. Between 1666 and 1678, the entire nobility of São Salvador left the city together with as many slaves and followers as could be controlled. The nobility moved to the provinces, where slaves continued to farm, but the great slave estates of the capital district were broken up. The winner in the civil wars was Mbanza Sonyo, whose population appears to have doubled during the last half of the seventeenth century, partly as a result of the slaves taken in the invasion of São Salvador.⁴¹ Sonyo now had the sole concentration of slaves; its government granted uncultivated land to nobles and missionaries, which was then cleared by slaves. Masters divided the land into two parts; the slaves worked the master's fields, and the whole of that product went to the master. On smaller plots, the slaves were expected to farm for their own subsistence.⁴² According to one Portuguese missionary, Cavazzi, who traveled through Kongo in 1657, slaves constituted half the population, although it is likely that Cavazzi based his estimate on Mbanza Sonyo alone. Those slaves in Sonyo, at least, he found poorly fed and frequently mistreated:

“they are exhausted by all manner of tasks; their lives are always very trying; the only payment they can hope for is a slight improvement in the treatment they receive.”⁴³

The Sonyo nobility exploited its population through the institution of pawnship and the taxation of the peasantry, as well as slavery. In the 1680s, the servile population included many pawns; one Capuchin missionary, Giuseppe Maria da Busseto, spent much of his time redeeming pawns, thereby collecting information on the prevalence of pawnship.⁴⁴ Raids on the peasantry also continued. In 1701, for example, one noble seized fifty-eight people in a Kongo village that apparently had not paid its taxes.⁴⁵

With the decline of the commercial corridor through Mpinda to São Salvador (already underway in the early seventeenth century and finalized during the civil wars), the focus of slave concentration shifted to the south. This region – home of the Mbundu and location of Luanda – supplied many of Kongo’s slaves, but other slaves were also settled there, particularly after the foundation of Kasanje and Matamba. These slaves served three main functions: males were incorporated into the slave-supply mechanism as warriors; women bore children for their husbands and masters; and both males and females were used in economic capacities, especially agriculture and head portage. There were other functions too, including sacrifice, but the contribution of slaves to enslavement, reproduction, and the economy were most characteristic of the slave mode of production here. Even sacrifice was important on the ideological level and reinforced social control.

The Imbangala war bands who moved north toward Kongo in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries relied on a type of slavery that required rapid assimilation and extreme dependence.⁴⁶ Those slaves who became soldiers were boys; only uncircumcised youths were taken into the Imbangala ranks, and this meant that the oldest boys were often only seven or eight. The Imbangala also wanted women and older people as long as they could work. Some slaves had a less desirable fate: They were sacrificed before battle. It was reported that Imbangala warlords killed from one to five slaves before a raid, and these were fed to the warriors in a concoction that included sacrificed animals. This cannibalism had the military effect discussed in Chapter 5: It was one among many tactics that terrified people and helped give the Imbangala the military advantage through psychological warfare. The killing of slaves also had an important effect on the slave population, for it demonstrated the power that masters had over their slaves. Imbangala captives faced two extremes: they could be assimilated into the war band, with expectation of full membership as soldiers or wives, or they could be killed or sold to Europeans. The prospect of death had the desired effect of promoting assimilation among those slaves who were singled out from the trade.⁴⁷

Once the Imbangala became less interested in raiding for slaves and established more permanent commercial ties with the interior – a process examined in some detail in Chapters 4 and 5 – it was necessary to stabilize the

interaction between the kinless Imbangala and the Mbundu lineages. This stabilization was advantageous, and indeed necessary, for the lineages, because the Imbangala had a monopoly on trade and military power. Now the lineages accepted a tributary position to the Imbangala: They sent slaves and women to the *kilombo* centers. If they did not do this, they were raided. If they met Imbangala exactions, they could achieve a level of safety and might receive some of the imported goods obtained from the Portuguese. They could at least expect the freedom to buy salt and other necessary items. This consolidation of a more peaceful transfer of people from the lineages to the Imbangala *kilombo* indicates that slaves were common in the lineages by the last part of the seventeenth century.⁴⁸

The lineage slaves appear largely to have been convicted criminals, sorcerers, and people purchased from other lineages. It may be that some were victims of kidnapping and local quarrels. The relative importance of these sources is unclear, but it is certain that many of these slaves were not incorporated into the lineages. They could not be, for to do so would prevent their use as tribute. It was essential that each lineage should maintain slaves as a reserve for the Imbangala. Otherwise, full lineage members would have to fill the tribute quotas. The nature of slavery, therefore, reinforced kinship; slaves were held in common. They worked for the good of the lineage, and they could be sent to the Imbangala warlords when necessary. Slavery, therefore, had more of a political nature than an economic one. It developed to safeguard people who were related genetically. Slavery was a means of segregating people who were not part of the lineage and who could be exploited because of their lack of kinship affiliation.

At the height of the slave trade in the second half of the eighteenth century, Matamba (Ginga), Kasanje, and Portuguese Angola incorporated large numbers of slaves. Again, the relationship with the export trade is clear. According to census data, female slaves outnumbered male slaves by more than two to one – the exact inverse of the sex ratio in the trans-Atlantic trade from Luanda.⁴⁹ Because females were often undercounted, the disparity was perhaps even greater. By this time, polygamy was widespread, probably on a greater scale than ever before. While the retention of women helped minimize the impact of the slave trade on the demography of west-central Africa, female slaves were concentrated along the trade routes and at political centres. Birthrates were probably still lower than among demographically balanced populations; at least studies of comparable situations in other periods would suggest as much. Nonetheless, the social formation was altered in a unique way. Some men controlled large numbers of female slaves and their offspring while huge tracts of countryside were devoid of people.

These women were used in production. They wove raffia cloth, a craft that traditionally belonged to males elsewhere in the interior. Apparently the shift from a male to a female occupation occurred because of the availability of women. Most agricultural laborers were also women who farmed their own

plots allotted to them by their husbands-masters. Plantation conditions appear to have existed only with the Portuguese and other merchants, although it is possible that some other slave owners had enough workers to organize field work in a regimented fashion. Marriage effectively protected women from this fate; instead, labor was obtained through a combination of the institutions of marriage and slavery.

Developments on the coast near Loango, a port frequented by European, especially British and French, slave ships during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, demonstrate the kind of changes that occurred under the impetus of the demand for slaves in the Americas.⁵⁰ The methods of enslavement became more common over time, so that conviction for murder, robbery, adultery, and debt were punishable through enslavement, and this punishment reveals that foreign trade subverted local Vili society and economy. The developments were similar to what happened at Luanda and Benguela. Severe punishment for theft and murder protected the operations of merchants and provided slaves for the merchants. Enslavement for debt helped guarantee credit arrangements. Previously, if the example of neighboring people is any indication of the traditional practice, debts could be settled through pawning. A change in the penalty for debt, therefore, reflected the greater commercialization of Vili society. The seriousness with which adultery was treated, however, reveals that dependency was still characteristic. The institution of marriage continued to be sacrosanct because custom required that marriage arrangements do more than unite two people in matrimony. Marriage tied kin groups together in carefully managed contracts that involved commercial partnerships, exchange of property, and reciprocal pacts for defense.

The manipulation of the legal system evident among the Vili becomes clearer when it is realized that the judges in cases resulting in enslavement were the largest slave owners and wealthiest merchants. The incidence of slavery increased from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century.⁵¹ At the height of the external slave trade, the number of slaves owned by a man was a sure sign of his wealth, for the size of a man's following was an important indication of his commercial activities. Slaves were used as porters to carry ivory, copper, and other goods from the interior. The number of slaves is a good indication of wealth in any society, but among the Vili, as among many African societies, dependency was crucial. Slaves were not only commodities. They were also people, and their loyalty was assured by granting them concessions as they participated more fully in the affairs of their masters. These acquired rights can best be seen with the Vili through the types of employment open to them. As porters in the caravan trade to the interior, they were allowed some freedom to act on their own account. Otherwise there was danger of escape and theft. As dependents of merchants, they were given certain safeguards for their future, and particularly for the future of their children. The inhabitants of the Loango ports were exempted from judicial enslavement. Anyone born there could not be sold into slavery, no matter what the crime. Other distinctions,

perhaps less serious but none the less instructive of the ways in which Vili slavery conformed to similar patterns of dependency, were also recognized. When an important man displayed himself officially, slaves carried goods behind him, while other dependents fanned him. It was the same at Luanda, Ambaca, Ndongo, and Benguela.

Lunda and Luba warlords participated in the slave trade because they could mobilize the population of the interior for enslavement, production, and trade. Slaves were channeled toward the Imbangala fairs, but many were settled around the Lunda centers, as the case of the capital territory of the *mwant yaav* (king) most clearly demonstrates. This district, the *mussumba*, was located in the fertile valleys of the Kalanyi and Luiza Rivers, two tributaries of the Lulua River. The actual capital was moved when a new *mwant yaav* came to power, but throughout this district were plantations, worked by slaves and poor women. The origin of this plantation system is closely associated with the rise of slave trading.⁵² It may well be that Luba was also drawn into the orbit of the slave trade in the eighteenth century and that patterns of slavery in Luba were similar to those in Lunda. Luba was centered in the area around Lake Boya and the Upemba Depression, further into the interior than Lunda, but political and commercial expansion are associated with the eighteenth century. Although there is no direct evidence for a firm link with slave exporting, the Luba kings established slave villages and slave lineages as a result of raids and expansive wars.⁵³

Most of the inland states incorporated slaves in ways not unlike other matrilineal societies, in which men wanted slave wives in order to negate the legal rights of in-laws. For slave women, there were no relatives. Hence many women found themselves in servile relationships that were substituted for other types of dependency based on kinship. Slave children, moreover, were probably assimilated as adopted kin, as they were in the nineteenth century. The status of slavery became less onerous over time, and children born into slavery – perhaps only a small portion of the total slave population – could expect to grow up as members of their master's lineage.

In west-central Africa, the social formation combined modes of production based on matrilineal kinship, slavery, and tributary relationships. The region was more directed toward the export trade than the West African coast or the northern savanna; the 3.5 million slaves exported to the Americas between 1600 and 1800 appear to have come from a smaller population base than was true in West Africa and the northern savanna. The social formation was distorted accordingly. Kinship structures encouraged the incorporation of slave women, even though lineage society was rooted in matrilineal customs and thereby tied together through free women. This contradiction between the pull of matrilineages and the power of men who accumulated slaves and pawns found a resolution in tributary relationships. Warlords exacted tribute, often in the form of slaves, from the lineages; when regular payments were not forthcoming, slave raids accomplished similar results. The preponderance of female

slaves in the lineages and among the commercial and tributary sectors was achieved through the export of disproportionately large numbers of men. The articulation of slavery with tributary and lineage structures demonstrates that the social formation of west-central Africa was first and foremost a supplier of slaves for export. The connection with the Americas was essential to this formation; the productive sphere was really concentrated there, despite some development on the periphery of west-central Africa itself (see further discussion in this chapter).

European Slavery in Africa

The slave populations in the European enclaves along the Guinea coast, in Angola, at Cape Town, and in Zambezia were generally associated with trade, including the slave-supply mechanism; these slaves manned commercial establishments, performing menial tasks, loading and unloading ships, and transporting goods into the interior. Some slaves also worked on farms to supply ships and the European outposts. Other slaves served as soldiers, capturing people for export or guarding trade slaves. These slaves – owned by Europeans and Euro-Africans – should be discussed in the context of slavery in the Americas as well as slavery in Africa. Their existence was directly related to the expansion of the European economy that included the development of plantations and mining in the Americas, the evolution of the slave-supply mechanism in Africa, and the growth of trade with Asia. By the end of the eighteenth century, the slaves in the European enclaves may have totaled 60,000 to 100,000.

By the eighteenth century, there were perhaps 5,000 or more slaves at the European outposts along the West African coast; many of these were owned by chartered companies, although the number belonging to Euro-Africans appears to have increased. At James Fort on the Gambia, there were thirty-two company slaves in 1730 and forty-three in 1763, and, given that the population of the fort was usually not greater than a hundred or so, slaves formed a large proportion of the inhabitants. At the larger French posts at Saint Louis and Gorée, the percentage of slaves was even greater, reaching as much as 86 percent of the population. In 1755, for example, Saint Louis had 648 slaves, 98 owned by the French company and 550 by residents. The number of slaves was reported to be 3,108 in 1776, 1,858 in 1779, 2,000 in 1785, and 2,400 in 1786. At Gorée, there were 768 slaves in 1767, 1,200 in 1776, and 1,044 in 1785.⁵⁴

Along the estuaries of the upper Guinea coast, the number of company slaves was usually several hundred at the major shipping points. Except for convicted criminals, these slaves were not exported; instead, they were trained to operate the local stations. On the Gold Coast, the Dutch and English trade castles kept slaves as domestics, agricultural workers, craftsmen, and common laborers. Most Europeans took concubines as well. These slaves and their descendants who had the skills needed by the European factors sometimes were successful

in investing on their own. Along the upper Guinea coast, such Afro-Europeans occasionally owned plantations near the major commercial centers, supplying rice and other foodstuffs for the local market and the slave ships.⁵⁵

The largest concentration of slaves at the European enclaves associated with the slave trade was in Angola, where Portuguese missionaries, traders, and officials had owned slaves since the sixteenth century. Even though the southward shift of Portuguese activities from the Kongo-São Tomé axis to Luanda reflected a decline in the importance of both Kongo and São Tomé, there continued to be European-owned slaves in both places. São Tomé – greatly reduced in importance as a plantation colony after the 1590s – nonetheless still relied on slave labor, although on a relatively small scale by comparison with the Americas. In Kongo, missionaries and merchants employed slave labor from the early seventeenth century on; one man – Gaspar Alvarés – reportedly owned “one hundred plantations of *arimos* [small farms] in Kongo and Angola, and thousands of slaves,” which he amassed before 1632, the year he gave his holdings to the Jesuits.⁵⁶ All the missionaries used slaves extensively, both in agriculture and as porters.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the greatest concentration of Portuguese-owned slaves developed in the area centered near Luanda between the Dande River in the north and the Kwanza River in the south, inland as far as the Lukala River. There was a second region further south around Benguela inland to the edge of the central plateau. These areas became centers of plantation agriculture operated by Portuguese and Afro-Portuguese who were involved in the slave trade with the interior.⁵⁷ Some estimate of the size of the slave population can be gained from the Portuguese census of 1777 and 1778, which establishes that slaves formed a considerable portion of the population in the core areas of Portuguese control. Women outnumbered men in this population – far greater percentages of male slaves being exported. As a result, women performed much of the agricultural labor in the region, and the demographic structure of the slave population reinforced the patterns of labor organization.⁵⁸ Portuguese slave owners relied on female labor in the production of foodstuffs needed to feed the trade slaves and to stock the slave ships. The use of slave labor was a logical extension of the export trade, because some slaves could easily be put to work in the business of sending the majority to Brazil.

The accumulation of slaves at Cape Town and in its hinterland was also a by-product of European commercial expansion, although the connection with the trans-Atlantic slave trade was more indirect than slave use along the Guinea coast and in Angola. Founded in 1652 as a way-station in the Dutch trade to the orient, the Cape settlement catered to ships passing to and from India and Indonesia, whose cargoes included cowries and textiles for the slave trade as well as spices and other goods for European consumption. Even the cowries and textiles were first imported into the Netherlands before being re-exported back to Africa. A few slave ships from southeast Africa and Madagascar stopped at the Cape for provisions, but this trade was small until the end of

the eighteenth century. The flow of trade brought slaves, however; most came from Madagascar; some came from southeastern Africa, and some even came from Asia.⁵⁹

In the early years of the colony, the Dutch East India Company owned most of the slaves at the Cape, who were used to maintain the port facilities, and the Company always remained the largest single owner of slaves. By the first two decades of the eighteenth century, the Company owned more than 400 slaves; thereafter its holdings remained relatively fixed in size, averaging several hundred until after mid-century and attaining a peak of 946 in 1789. Many of these slaves were kept in company-owned barracks, first built in 1679 and expanded in later years. The occupations of the company slaves included the range of activities needed in the port: carpenters, masons, coopers, smiths, stevedores, and general laborers, although some were also gardeners and shepherds. As is evident in these occupations, the company had a major influence in determining the nature of slavery; commercial operations were foremost in the treatment of slaves and in the governing of virtually all aspects of the colony.⁶⁰

As the number of Dutch immigrants increased in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, slavery became an essential part of the expanding colony; free whites considered manual labor fit for slaves or Khoikhoi, who were reduced to servile status as tenants or dependent shepherds. The white population expanded from only 125 in 1670 to 1,695 in 1711. Thereafter, population continued to grow slowly, reaching 4,511 in 1750, 7,736 in 1770, and attaining a high of about 20,000 by 1798. Many of these settlers were also associated with the transit trade around the Cape, but some whites moved into the interior, where they opened farms or raised stock. By the early eighteenth century, the slave population was already equal to the number of free whites – approximately 2,000 slaves by the second decade of the century. The company decided in 1717 to discourage the immigration of more Dutch in favor of importing more slaves; thereafter, the slave population grew even more rapidly, eventually reaching a total of 25,000 in the 1790s.⁶¹

The size of slave holdings varied considerably, although in general holdings were not as large as on the plantations of the Americas. In the early eighteenth century, some settlers owned considerable numbers of slaves, but most settlers owned only a few, if any. One governor had more than 200 slaves settled on his estate at Vergelegen, and other colonists had from 10 to 20 slaves each.⁶² By the middle of the century, this range of holdings was well consolidated; there were relatively few large slave holdings; only seven owners had more than fifty-one slaves, with the largest having ninety-four slaves. Nonetheless, these seven masters had 24 percent of all the colony's slaves. Another 25 masters held between 26 and 50 slaves, and 117 owners had between 11 and 25 slaves. These figures are significant because they demonstrate that a relatively few individuals owned most of the slaves at the Cape, and these same individuals dominated the agricultural economy. The company satisfied its requirements

for basic provisions by issuing supply contracts to the highest bidder, who then enjoyed a monopoly of the company's business. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of slave owners had only a few slaves, so that in the white population as a whole there was a high incidence of slave holding. In 1750, almost half the male population owned at least one slave.⁶³

In many ways, slavery at the Cape was a cross between the slavery of the Americas and the castle slavery of the European commercial establishments along the West African coast, as well as enclaves at Luanda and Benguela.⁶⁴ Because the company was the largest single slave owner and many townfolk worked in commercially related activities that depended on the transit trade between Europe and the Indian Ocean, slaves were shielded from the harshest forms of slave management. Furthermore, the size of slave holdings also meant that many slaves had the opportunity to acquire skills that allowed for the possibility of some improvement in well-being. Nonetheless, race was a significant factor in the control of the slave population, just as it was in the Americas. The pattern of conversion to Christianity, miscegenation, manumission, and cultural change are more similar to the history of slavery in tropical America than to other European enclaves in Africa.⁶⁵ The farmers in the hinterland used slaves as field hands, raising crops that could be sold at the port to provision ships and to maintain the town's inhabitants. The wheat farms and vineyards of the interior averaged sixty hectares in the early eighteenth century; these were large farms, not plantations. The cattle ranges beyond the farms and vineyards were much bigger, but slave holdings were not large. The trekboers, as the Dutch settlers were called, relied primarily on dependent Khoikhoi and only a few slaves for labor on these frontier estates.⁶⁶

The Dutch community at the Cape prided itself on the differences between its treatment of slaves and the plantation slavery of the Americas. The comparison is instructive, even though the contemporary assessment needs considerable qualification, because the comparison is an implicit recognition that slavery at the Cape and slavery in the Americas were similar. As Commissary General J. A. de Mist, who was sent to the Cape in 1802, reported:

There is a great difference between the treatment of these slaves and [that] meted to those who are yearly shipped to America from the Congo and Angola. At the Cape they are, in the majority of cases at least, looked upon as permanent family servants.... The abundance of the necessities of life and the comparatively easy work of fetching and carrying wood, herding cattle, tilling the fields, labouring in the vineyards or attending to the daily housework makes their lot in life quite tolerable, and if, at times, some inhuman wretch is found who ill-treats his slaves, nowhere is there a better opportunity of obstructing and altogether preventing this ill-treatment by means of good laws than at the Cape.⁶⁷

This account clearly establishes that slaves performed most of the work at the Cape. While de Mist was probably correct in suggesting that the lot of most slaves in the Americas was worse than the majority of slaves at the Cape,

the reasons for this were not because of a superior legal system in the Dutch colony. Rather, it was usually the case that slaves in small holdings, particularly at commercial centers, fared better than plantation slaves. In this sense, the Cape slaves benefited, but when allowance is made for a distinction between the town slaves and the agricultural workers of the countryside, which de Mist does not do in his portrait, then the Dutch settlement must be considered to be similar to the Americas.

Slave holdings among the Portuguese settlers in the Zambezi valley were also considerable, originating in the sixteenth century but becoming particularly important in the seventeenth. Here slavery was really determined by the military functions that the Portuguese had traditionally filled in the Zambezi region. Their earliest contacts were as mercenaries, and they acquired slaves to fill the ranks of their private armies.⁶⁸ These soldiers, called *achikunda* (hence the ethnic name, Chikunda), sometimes farmed, but only to feed themselves, and more often they lived off the tribute provided by African peasants on the lands claimed by the Portuguese warlords. These vast tracts of territory, nominally granted by the Portuguese crown as landed estates that were supposed to revert back to the crown after three generations or some other specified period, in reality constituted a political order that received local recognition only because of the armed might of the slave soldiers. Ties of dependency characterized the relationship between lord and Chikunda warrior. They lived off the tribute extracted from the peasantry in the same way that Bambara regiments did in the western Sudan. Some slaves were employed in mining gold in the Zambezi basin; a few Portuguese settlers had as many as 300 slaves in gold production. Nonetheless, the dominant pattern was the use of slaves as soldiers.

Fernando de Jesus Maria described the corporate identity that prevailed among slaves on the *prazos* in 1762, revealing their essentially military function. It was not possible to order these slaves around as if they were mere chattels. As soldiers, they knew that the strength of the *prazo* depended on their support, and despite their slave origins, they secured for themselves a status above that of the free peasantry. Fernando's account reveals this feature of slavery on the *prazo*:

The slaves which are kept in each household as though part of the entail are called the *botaca*. These slaves have a leader who is called a *mocasambo* and another second to him called *sachikunda* who is the same as the treasurer in these *botacas* who does all the business. The *senhor* [master] cannot give a single negro of the *botaca* away without the others all mutinying ... to the *mocasambo* the negroes have such a blind obedience that if it is necessary to execute any one of them he will briefly consult with the eldest of the slaves and the execution will be carried out at once without any demur.⁶⁹

Fernando was referring to the able-bodied men who were organized into military units of ten or twelve men under a *tsachikunda*, and together formed regiments under the command of a *mukazambo*. Production was left to the

women, who formed a considerable portion of the slave population. In 1759, the family of Dona Ines Pessoa de Almeida Castellobranco had an estimated 6,000 slaves, and contemporary Jesuit records provide inventories that confirm a total of 1,837 slaves on her two largest estates at Cheringoma and Gorongosa, exclusive of women and children. Ten *prazo*-holders had holdings of more than 1,000 slaves in 1759; 11 had holdings of 500 to 1,000 slaves; and there were many holdings with fewer than 500 slaves. Altogether there were some 33,500 slaves reported. Other holdings included those of Nicolau Pascoal da Cruz, who claimed to own 340 slaves in this same period. In 1788, the slave holdings of João Fernandes do Rozario consisted of 25 adult male slaves and 8 females on one *prazo*; at another, he had 20 men and 60 women; while at a third, he had 15 males and 30 female slaves. On a fourth *prazo*, the sexual division of its 60 slaves is not reported. In his household were 50 boys and 30 girls, as well as 42 slaves with special skills, but whose sex is unknown. Altogether João Fernandes do Rozario had at least 500 slaves.⁷⁰

Slavery in the Zambezi valley shared some features of local African ideas of slavery as a form of dependency, but Europeans and Afro-Europeans were the masters. The resulting adaptation of European models of slavery to the African setting helped transform the social formation so that it became connected with the slave trade. The *prazo*-holders increasingly relied on the export of slaves for a major portion of their income, especially in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Tribute from the subject peasantry was associated with slavery through the threat of violence which the slave armies of Chikunda could inflict on recalcitrant people. European forms of slavery were not directly imposed on Africans; rather the Portuguese became another group of warlords. The partial assimilation of the Portuguese into the local political economy merged the Portuguese need for slave labor in the Americas with African conceptions of slavery.

African slave owners did not generally exploit slaves in the same ways as Europeans because the possibilities of productive agriculture and mining based on slavery were largely absent, except in a relatively few places. This confinement of productive slavery reveals a crucial feature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The exploitation of slaves for purely economic motives was found in the European enclaves and in some places like Asante and Dahomey, but the association of slavery with the economy was more characteristic of the European sector than the African, except when the African sector was strongly associated with exports. The existence of *prazos* with large numbers of slaves in a region where lineages had only a few slaves is typical of this pattern. In effect, two modes of production existed side by side; estate holders, with their Chikunda armies and slave villages, were tied into a system of slavery, whereas the small peasant communities scattered throughout the Zambezi valley were only marginally affected by slavery and instead were organized on the basis of kinship.⁷¹

While slavery underwent a transformation in response to the expansion of the slave trade, the nature of this transformation was unique in different parts

of the Atlantic coastal basin. The interaction between indigenous patterns of dependency and the foreign trade resulted in major social changes. These were closely associated with centralized states on the Gold Coast and in the Bight of Benin, with a decentralized commercial confederation in the Bight of Biafra, and with a system of administered trade in west-central Africa. What linked all three tendencies was the legacy of an ideology based on kinship structures. Whether slaves were employed in production, as retainers, in the military, or as bearers of children, slavery strengthened kinship groups. The primacy of kinship remained secure even as the political economy became interwoven with the intercontinental network of slavery. Kinship helped define who could be exported and who would benefit from this exchange. Increasingly, slavery became the basis of social differentiation.

By 1800, Africa was divided into three zones, whereas in 1500 it had been divided in half. The Islamic frontier still existed; indeed it had expanded somewhat in the intervening centuries. Along the Guinea coast and in the Zambezi valley, the European slave trade had effected changes so that slave societies had emerged where previously there had been none. These were the two externally orientated regions where slavery was most pronounced. In between these two spheres was a zone in which slavery remained marginal to society.

The Nineteenth-Century Slave Trade

The Dynamics of Slavery in the Nineteenth Century

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the slave trade from Africa had assumed gigantic proportions. It was the largest human migration to date, and hence can be regarded as the first of the world's modern migrations. The peculiar nature of this migration, based as it was on slavery, made its organization complex, for the infrastructure necessary to move such large numbers of people against their will required the mobilization of resources on several continents. After the temporary decline caused by war in Europe during the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade from the Guinea coast resumed its previous level, and the export trade now affected East Africa considerably. Slaves became more common wherever the export trade was important. The transformation of the political economy that resulted in the more systematic enslavement of people and the organization of the domestic slave trade pushed the African societies involved toward the more intensified exploitation of slave labor. Indeed, the productive dimension of slavery became more important than ever before.

A new factor in the history of slavery in Africa emerged in the midst of this situation. This factor was the movement to abolish the slave trade.¹ Reformers began to attack the trade in the last decades of the eighteenth century; the first United States laws were enacted in 1791 and 1794; Denmark instituted abolition in 1802; in 1807, Great Britain, the largest carrier of slaves to the Americas, made it illegal for her merchants to participate in the trade. The United States embarked on the same path in 1808, the same year that British laws actually became effective. From then on, despite many setbacks, half-hearted enforcement, and extensive smuggling, the days of slavery were numbered. The British government subsequently pressured other European and New World countries to follow its lead, a diplomatic effort that took most of

the nineteenth century before the trans-Atlantic trade really came to an end. Besides its diplomatic assault, Great Britain stationed part of its navy off the African shore to enforce abolition. France, the United States, and other countries joined this military effort. This blockade, which was relatively ineffective early in the nineteenth century, had an increasingly severe impact on the trade, making it difficult for ships to buy slaves in many places. The full effects of these measures, however, were not really felt until the 1840s and later still in East Africa.

Once the trans-Atlantic slave trade became the subject of attack, it took many decades for all the countries of the Americas and Europe to reach a common commitment to abolition. The same was true for the emancipation of slaves in the Americas, begun first in the French Revolution and pursued in due course by Britain, the United States, Spain, Brazil, and other countries. As this attack proceeded, the antislave trade forces directed their attention against the Islamic world, forcing the Ottoman Empire and other states into diplomatic positions where abolition was necessary. The attack on the slave trade within Africa, not to mention slavery itself, proceeded more slowly. European countries were unwilling to intervene in African affairs, except when European rivalries required some action. Consequently, it was often argued that slavery in Africa was different from slavery in the Americas and therefore could be left alone. Nonetheless, the logic of abolition pushed European countries into untenable positions that, despite vacillation and contradictory behavior, steadily led to greater intervention and ultimately to the abolition of both the slave trade and slavery.

One example of such a contradiction was the pursuit of "legitimate trade," a term used at the time and by scholars ever since to distinguish between the slave trade that increasingly was recognized as illegal and commerce in "legitimate" goods, particularly ivory, peanuts, palm oil, gold, rubber, cloves, hides and skins, ostrich feathers, beeswax, and gum arabic.² Many of these goods were already exported alongside slaves, but their share of total exports gradually increased. For abolitionists, moreover, this shift in exports had an especially significant meaning. They argued that the abolition of the slave trade and the development of legitimate trade would bring slavery itself to an end. With respect to Africa, however, they could not have been more wrong. Many of the "legitimate" goods destined for world markets were grown or transported by slaves, for slavery had become an integral part of African economies. The end of the external slave trade did not mean the collapse of the internal slave trade. Despite the aims of the abolitionists, the transition from exporting slaves to exporting other commodities resulted in the increased use of slaves in Africa.

The dynamics of slavery in the nineteenth century involved the interaction between the forces of abolition and the pervasiveness of slavery in Africa. On the one hand, the ability to enslave people was at its height, and the domestic use of slaves was most intensive. On the other hand, the abolitionists exerted increasing pressure on African societies, leading to a series of clashes that were

intimately connected with the imposition of colonialism. These two dynamic forces, one internal and one external, set the framework for the full transformation of slavery within the African context. Ironically, this transformation was achieved precisely at the moment in history when abolition was inevitable.

Slave exports for all parts of the continent amounted to almost 6.2 million (see Table 7.1), about 1.6 million fewer than total slave exports for all sectors in the eighteenth century (7.8 million). There were more than 4 million people sold across the Atlantic, representing about 65 percent of all exports. The Atlantic trade was down about 38 percent from the scale of the trans-Atlantic traffic in the eighteenth century (6.5 million). Meanwhile, however, the other sectors of the nineteenth-century trade expanded. Some 442,000 slaves were traded from East Africa within the Indian Ocean basin, whereas, if the 407,000 slaves shipped from southeastern Africa to the Americas are included, approximately 850,000 slaves left East Africa – a figure much larger than the volume of any earlier century. Approximately 492,000 slaves crossed the Red Sea from Ethiopia and the area to its south, and again the number surpassed earlier trade.³ This general increase also applied to the trans-Saharan trade, which accounted for another 1.2 million slaves, many of whom came from the upper Nile valley. Even though the figures for the Red Sea, East African, and trans-Saharan trades are still not as reliable as the other estimates, they are more accurate than the comparable figures for earlier centuries. Nonetheless, the total for these sectors could be several hundred thousand slaves lower or higher.

The aggregate totals for the export trade suggest some general hypotheses that are similar to those explored for the period from 1600 to 1800. First, the volume of the trade was so large that the incidence of slavery in the exporting regions probably increased. The age and sex distribution of the trans-Atlantic trade demonstrates that this conclusion is likely (Table 7.2). The greater number of children in the deported population suggests that the American market may have changed, perhaps in anticipation of the ending of the trade. The percentage of females in the adult population declined, especially in west-central Africa, which exported more and more children, and in Mozambique, where the trade was almost entirely in boys and young men. This preference in the trans-Atlantic trade for males and children suggests that an even greater proportion of female slaves were retained in Africa than in the eighteenth century.

Secondly, the price of slaves at the export points in West Africa, but not in west-central Africa, dropped substantially as a result of abolitionist efforts to end the trade. On the Gold Coast, for example, the price of a male slave dropped from 12 ounces 4 ackies (£45.00) in May 1789, to 9 ounces (£32.40) in about 1803, to 7 ounces (£25.20) in about 1807, to 3 ounces (£10.80) in 1815.⁴ LeVeen has recorded this decline in terms of dollars: Prices were close to \$100 (£20.80) along the West African coast from 1790 to 1810, but the decline set in by the 1820s, falling from about \$80 (£16.70) in 1820 to \$50 (£10.40) by 1860.⁵ However, in real prices, the decline in slave prices was short-lived (Table 7.3). Real prices dropped from £23.30–25.30 in the last decade before

TABLE 7.1. *Slave Departures from Africa in the Nineteenth Century*

Region	Number of slaves	Percent
Atlantic	4,027,000	65.4
Saharan	1,200,000	19.5
Red Sea	492,000	8.0
Indian Ocean	442,000	7.2
TOTAL	6,161,000	

Sources: for the Atlantic trade, see Tables 7.4, 7.5. Saharan: Ralph A. Austen, "The trans-Saharan slave trade: a tentative census," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979a), 66; Red Sea: Ralph A. Austen, "The 19th century Islamic slave trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea coasts): A tentative census," *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 33; Richard Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian slave trade in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: a statistics inquiry," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9:1 (1964), 220–8. Indian Ocean: Edmond B. Martin and T. C. I. Ryan, "A quantitative assessment of the Arab slave trade of East Africa," *Kenya Historical Review* 5 (1977), 79. Another 95,000 slaves were exported to the Mascarene Islands in the first decade of the nineteenth century; see Table 7.7. Also see Ralph A. Austen, "The Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade out of Africa: A Tentative Census," in Elizabeth Savage, ed., *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 214–48; Paul E. Lovejoy, Commercial sectors in the economy of the nineteenth-century central Sudan: the trans-Saharan trade and the desert-side salt trade. *African Economic History* 13 (1984), 85–116; Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London: James Currey, 1987), E. Ann McDougall, "Salt, Saharans, and the Trans Saharan Slave Trade: Nineteenth-Century," in Elizabeth Savage, ed., *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 61–88; Janet Ewald, "The Nile valley system and Red Sea slave trade 1820–1880," *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 71–92; Hubert Gerbeau and Eric Saugera, *La dernière traite: fragments d'histoire en hommage à Serge Daget* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1994); Isabel de Castro Henriques, *Commerce et Changement en Angola au XIX^e siècle. Imbangala et Tshokwe face à la modernité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), 2 vols; Elizabeth Savage, ed., *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (London: Frank Cass, 1992); Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *From Slaving to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po in the Era of Abolition (1827–1930)* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society. The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim Press, 1995).

British abolition to a low of £7.70 per slave in 1815–1820, before rebounding to levels comparable to the 1780s and early 1790s.⁶

The rise in the price of slaves in anticipation of abolition and then the temporary collapse of prices thereafter does not appear to have been reflected in the supply of newly enslaved people. Almost everywhere in the interior the price of slaves was cheap; at least data from the Sokoto Caliphate, Zanzibar, and elsewhere indicate as much. For the Sokoto Caliphate, Tambo has shown that the average mean price for young females was Maria Theresa thalers

TABLE 7.2. *Weighted Mean Ratios of Males and Children, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1810–1867*

	Upper Guinea	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central Africa	Southeast Africa	All regions	Number of slaves
Male ratio	0.709	0.680	0.647	0.721	0.800	0.715	101,999
Child ratio	0.404	0.327	0.359	0.530	0.501	0.461	75,471

Source: David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fluctuations in sex and age ratios in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, 1663–1864," *Economic History Review* 46 (1993), 310.

TABLE 7.3. *Slave Prices on the Atlantic Coast of Africa, 1783–1850 (£ sterling)*

Period	Current Prices West Africa	Real Prices West Africa	Real Prices Atlantic Coast
1783–1787	15.6	15.6	14.8
1788–1792	19.5	19.1	17.6
1793–1797	18.0	17.5	16.8
1798–1802	27.3	23.5	21.0
1803–1807	33.2	25.3	22.3
1808–1814	17.2	14.2	13.9
1815–1820	8.5	7.7	9.4
1821–1825	8.5	11.0	12.9
1826–1830	11.5	17.2	18.3
1831–1835	7.5	12.9	12.9
1836–1840	10.0	18.5	18.5
1841–1845	8.2	16.7	16.7
1846–1850	11.3	23.1	23.1

Sources: Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "British abolition and its impact on slave prices at the Atlantic coast of Africa, 1783–1850," *Journal of Economic History* 55:1 (1995a). Current prices are converted to real prices based on the evidence of Ralph Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 86 on market prices of exports and reexports at five-year intervals, beginning in 1784–1786 and ending in 1854–1856. The prices for 1784–1786 are used to deflate slave prices in 1783–1787; prices for 1794–1796 are used to deflate slave prices for 1793–1797; and so on. The average of prices for ten-year intervals is used to deflate slave prices in the intervening periods.

(MT\$) 26 (£5.40) before 1850 and MT\$35 (£7.30) afterward, whereas for young men, the comparable figures were MT\$14 (£2.80) and MT\$19 (£3.90).⁷ When monetary inflation is taken into consideration, the real price of slaves declined, because monetary values fell by over 50 percent during the course of the century. A similar trend is evident for Zanzibar. The mean price of male slaves appears to have dropped from MT\$22.5 (£4.70) in 1844 to a low of MT\$11 (£2.30) in 1863, and only rebounded in the 1880s when abolitionist

pressures interrupted slave supplies. By 1885, the mean price was MT\$34.5 (£7.20), and in 1888 it was MT\$36 (£7.50). Scattered reports from the 1880s for the interior of East Africa, however, indicate that prices at Ujiji, Tabora, and other centers were lower, on the order of MT\$31.5 (£6.60) at Tabora in 1880 and MT\$18 (£3.80) at Ujiji in 1883.⁸

Indeed, the enslavement frontier seems to have been pushed farther into the interior than ever before, so that it is likely that the number of new captives actually increased. The temporary decline in prices along the West African coast and the generally low price of slaves in the interior suggest that slave labor became one of the most attractive investments for those with capital to invest. The trend was a continued high level of slaves in the areas traditionally supplying the Americas and increased numbers of slaves in many places where the slave trade had not been particularly important.

The Trans-Atlantic Trade: The Last Surge

The areas most affected by the continuation of the slave trade were west-central Africa, the Bights of Benin and Biafra, and southeast Africa (see Table 7.4). Together, these areas probably accounted for about 90 percent of the 3,874,000 slaves exported from 1801 to 1866, and west-central Africa accounted for more than half of the people shipped after 1807. Because of war in Europe and the restructuring of the trade following British abolition in 1808 and the withdrawal of other countries from the trade at about the same time, the scale of the trade declined by more than a third in the decade after 1807 (603,000) from the previous decade (914,000). After the peace accord of 1815, the trade rebounded, and some 770,000 people left in the decade 1816–1825, a level that was maintained until 1850. Hence, abolitionist efforts failed to stem the flow of the enslaved traffic in the first half of the nineteenth century, although some parts of the African coast were blockaded, thereby forcing the trade to adjust. Approximately 2,542,000 people crossed the Atlantic in the half-century following 1815, compared with 2,957,000 in the thirty-five years before British abolition in 1808. Except for a brief period after British abolition, therefore, the trade was on the same order of magnitude as in the eighteenth century. After 1850, however, the trade dropped off rapidly, with slightly more than 225,000 slaves exported in the 1850s and 1860s, before the trade ceased altogether.⁹ The Gold Coast ceased to be an important source for slaves after 1807, whereas the far western coast, including Senegambia, continued to supply some slaves, but increasingly these came from the many rivers of upper Guinea that the British navy found difficult to patrol. Whereas the far western coast had exported more than 17,000 slaves per year in the 1760s, this figure dropped to about 5,600 per year in the decade after 1807, and subsequently fluctuated in the range of 5,000 to 6,400 annually until c. 1840, with a larger proportion of the departures leaving from the rivers of the upper Guinea coast.

TABLE 7.4. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1801–1866*

	Sene-gambia	Upper Guinea	Wind-ward Coast	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West Central	South East Africa	Total Africa
1801–1810	53,700	42,600	25,200	75,700	95,400	140,400	334,000	50,500	823,600
1811–1820	29,200	22,600	7,200	1,700	74,100	65,900	407,500	77,700	685,800
1821–1830	13,100	45,500	7,900	5,400	58,300	163,500	442,000	121,200	855,700
1831–1840	4,600	43,900	3,200	3,300	73,100	97,800	343,500	116,900	686,300
1841–1850	8,400	21,000	0	0	108,900	27,600	387,000	43,600	596,500
1851–1860	0	4,800	00	0	22,500	2	113,900	30,200	171,400
1861–1866	0	0	0	0	11,300	0	42,900	0	54,200
TOTAL	108,900	178,500	43,500	86,100	444,700	495,200	2,076,700	440,000	3,873,600

Source: Eltis et al., *Slave Voyage Database*.

The slaves exported from the Bight of Benin in the nineteenth century – approximately 445,000 people, representing about 11.5 percent of the Atlantic trade – were heavily Yoruba in origin, although there were also some Muslims from farther north. In the 1820s and 1830s, Oyo, which had been so closely associated with the export of slaves in the eighteenth century, collapsed, and throughout the nineteenth century Dahomey and various Yoruba warlords fought among themselves in an effort to reestablish a centralized state in the region.¹⁰ The Oyo nobility had relied on Muslim slaves in the military, and these Muslims became involved in Oyo politics, first as supporters of one group of warlords and then as an independent factor. The crucial split occurred in 1817, when the Muslims, who dominated the cavalry, were called into action against the Oyo aristocracy. The autonomy gained in this uprising weakened Oyo, which suffered reversals at the hands of its subject provinces, while the defeat and collapse of Owu, long a loyal ally of Oyo in the south, poured many more slaves to the market between 1818 and 1823. The Muslim faction in Oyo allied itself to other Muslims farther to the north, and, from a stronghold at Ilorin, destroyed the Oyo capital in the mid-1830s. By this time, Ilorin had become an emirate that recognized the religious and political authority of Sokoto and Gwandu, the twin capitals of a new Islamic empire in the savanna. Although the ruling officials of Ilorin were not Yoruba, the subject populations of this new emirate were, and Ilorin continued to be actively involved in the wars that occurred with the collapse of Oyo. The development of new centers (including Ibadan and Abeokuta) and the independence of Dahomey reflected a new era of warlordism.¹¹

It might be argued that the Yoruba wars were fought only for political reasons. Indeed, the struggle for political supremacy was paramount in the minds of the warlords, but the political dimension also included enslavement as an effective weapon in destroying the independence of rival factions and in acquiring the human resources that could be exploited domestically or sold on the market. There is no better testimony to the consciousness of the enslavement process than the account of Samuel Crowther, who was seized, along with his family, during one of the many battles that ravaged the Yoruba country. The women and children had attempted to flee into the bush, but:

While they were endeavouring to disentangle themselves from the ropy shrubs, they were overtaken and caught by the enemies with a noose of rope thrown over the neck of every individual, to be led in the manner of goats tied together, under the drove of one man. In many cases a family was violently divided between three or four enemies, who each led his away, to see one another no more. Your humble servant was thus caught – with his mother, two sisters (one an infant about ten months old) and a cousin – while endeavouring to escape in the manner above described.¹²

Joseph Wright, another Yoruba slave who has left his account, reported a similar deliberateness on the part of the enslaving army: “The enemies satisfied themselves with little children, little girls, young men, and young women; and

so they did not care about the aged and old people. They killed them without mercy.... Abundant heaps of dead bodies were in the streets and there were none to bury them.”¹³

In the 1820s, approximately 163,000 slaves left the Bight of Benin, and in the 1830s and 1840s, another 182,000 slaves were exported – approximately 73,000 in the 1830s and 109,000 in the 1840s. Thereafter the trade fell off rapidly, so that only 23,000 slaves left in the 1850s and 11,000 in the 1860s. The effective ending of the trade related to the abolition of exports to Brazil and the British occupation of Lagos, both occurring in 1851. The French seizure of neighboring Porto Novo in the 1860s contributed to the blockade. Inland, however, enslavement and trade continued at their previous levels.¹⁴ The Yoruba wars accounted for many new slaves, and some came from the savanna to the north. The situation in the interior became increasingly complex. Slavery was an expansive institution from the 1850s through the early 1890s.

The Bight of Biafra supplied less than 14 percent of trans-Atlantic slave shipments between 1800 and 1850. The trade extending inland from the Niger delta was maintained at levels of departures slightly lower than those of the last several decades of the eighteenth century until c.1840. In part this was possible because the lagoons and creeks of the delta made it difficult for naval patrols, even when stationed at Fernando Po in the Bight itself, to detect the presence of European slave ships. Furthermore, some slaves exported from the Bight of Biafra came from greater distances inland than had previously been the case. Some were shipped down the Niger River; others reached the Cross River from the savanna country to the north.

The Aro commercial system, examined in Chapter 5, reached its fullest development in this period. Approximately three-quarters of the exported slaves still came from the Igbo-Ibibio area, but now the Aro relayed slaves from farther inland too.¹⁵ There was the odd foray by a coastal merchant firm, as one riverboat surprised that of a rival company in the delta, but most slaves appear to have been taken in raids and wars in the central and northern Igbo and Ibibio areas and others came from the interior of the Cross River. Young men hired themselves out to help settle disputes, and enslavement was a common tactic. Abiriba, Abam, Ohafia, and Edda warriors continued to serve as mercenaries for the Aro and others, sometimes attacking villages more than once. Of the twenty-five villages they are known to have raided, twenty were located in central and northern Igbo country.¹⁶ In the northern frontier areas, new settlers carved out huge tracts of land, which usually involved wars with the Igala. In this way, the Nike and the northeastern Igbo captured slaves for sale and for their own use, although counterraids also resulted in the enslavement of some Igbo.¹⁷

In the southern and central Igbo districts, most newly enslaved people were pawns, victims of kidnapping, or captives for oracles. Parents sold their own children because of debts, laziness, and insubordination; the distinction between

slave and pawn disappeared in some places, such as Nguru, where both were called *ohu*, the usual term for slave. In Enugwu-Ukwu and elsewhere, domestic slaves could be sold, despite a traditional prohibition against selling those born into slavery. Kidnapping was so common that in many places parents did not let their children play outside their walled compounds; the oral traditions collected by Elizabeth Isichei, which convey information on the last decades of the nineteenth century but appear to characterize most of the century, contain numerous stories of kidnapping.¹⁸ The oracles, despite their religious and legal functions that helped stabilize the segmented political order, also contributed to the number of new slaves. The oracles required slaves as payments for misdemeanors and for services rendered; the Ibinukpabi oracle of the Aro was the most important of these, but the Kamalu oracle at Ozuzu on the Otamiri River and other oracles of the Nri also enslaved people.¹⁹

Slave exports from the Niger delta fell off rapidly in the late 1830s, in part because the British were increasingly effective in their interception of slave ships and in part because of significant increases in the sale of palm oil to European merchants. In the 1830s, the British navy liberated 17,622 slaves from the Bight of Biafra. This was only a portion of the slave traffic, but it served as a deterrent that ultimately helped end the trade. Palm oil exports rose spectacularly, rising from about 3,000 tons in 1819 to almost 8,000 tons in 1829 to 12,800 tons in 1839. By the mid-1850s, the volume topped 24,000 tons per year and reached 41,000 tons annually in the 1860s.²⁰

The impact of this adjustment in the export sector was profound. Until the late 1830s, the economy expanded rapidly as a result of trade in both commodities. Thereafter, the palm oil trade attracted the attention of merchants and farmers, whereas the slave trade languished, except inasmuch as the local economy could absorb slaves domestically. Enslavement and slavery continued in a different setting, however, and the institutions that had facilitated the export of 900,000 people in the previous century still functioned. In the second half of the century, the scale of the slave trade along the Niger River and overland from the Benue River valley and the Bamenda plateau in the north indicates a considerable volume of slave traffic.²¹ This portion of the trade had only amounted to a fraction of total number of enslaved in the period between 1800 and 1835, but its continuation demonstrated the ability of the Biafra hinterland to absorb a steady stream of new slaves. Kidnapping, intervillage raiding, and enslavement through oracles and other legal-religious means persisted. There is no reason to believe that the general level of enslavement declined significantly. The only difference was that slaves were not sent to the Americas but instead were used domestically.²²

Between 1801 and 1866, west-central African exports were 2,077,000 slaves which accounted for more than half of all people shipped to the Americas in the period. In the half-century from 1801 to 1850, west-central Africa embarked almost half a million more slaves on ships for the Americas (1,920,000) than they had in the second half of the eighteenth century (1,447,000 slaves), when

the region was also the largest single supplier of the export trade. British abolition efforts were concentrated north of the equator, which reinforced the centrality of west-central Africa in the trans-Atlantic migration.

The sustained level of departures during the first half of the nineteenth century suggests that British efforts at abolition may have had an impact in parts of West Africa but hardly affected the scale of the slave migration.²³ The level of trade taxed the capabilities of the existing networks, however. The Lunda and Luba warlords siphoned off people from farther inland. In these decades, Kazembe, the most important of the Lunda states in the far interior, reached its height. Lunda, too, acquired wealth on an unprecedented scale. The new developments include the expansion of trade along the Congo River and its tributaries to the north. Previously, most slaves came from the savanna to the south of the Congo. Even slaves exported from Loango Bay and Cabinda came from Malebo Pool and ultimately from the savanna to the south and east. At this time of greater demand for slaves, however, Bobangi fishermen and merchants to the northeast of the Pool began to bring slaves down the river. The spread of cassava cultivation was related to this commercial growth, just as it had been in the earlier consolidation of trade between Lunda and the coast. Cassava could be transported easily on riverboats, and this enabled merchants to feed themselves and their slaves en route. The organization of Bobangi trade was similar to the trade of the Niger River and its delta. The Bobangi were not connected with a strong state but turned their control of river transport to their advantage. This required a willingness to fight as well as to trade.

The other major change in the commercial organization of west-central Africa involved the emergence of the Cokwe as a factor in politics and trade.²⁴ The Cokwe were hunters whose knowledge of the forests in the country between Kasanje and Lunda placed them in a favorable position to benefit from the rise in demand for ivory and beeswax, which became important exports from Angola in the 1830s. The Cokwe also raided for slaves, as they bought more guns from the proceeds of ivory and wax sales. The Cokwe sold their services to rival factions in succession disputes of the Imbangala, Ovimbundu, and Lunda, and they sometimes seized captives for no reason other than the inability of anyone to stop them and their own avarice.

At the time the Cokwe became a significant factor in the enslavement process, however, the export trade from west-central Africa was in its final stages of decline. Indeed, the Cokwe were instrumental in destroying the Lunda hegemony and hence played a major role in the collapse of the supply mechanism that had been responsible for the export of many slaves. It is likely that the internal troubles in Lunda were related to the decline in the demand for slaves; civil war apparently reflected a struggle over increasingly scarce resources. Cokwe slave raiding supplied new markets within central Africa. Now slaves might be sold north to Kuba or other markets, or they could be directed along the old routes to the coast. The reluctance of the Portuguese to enforce antislave trade provisions helped maintain slave demand, although on

a reduced scale, late into the century. Even when slave shipments across the Atlantic declined abruptly after 1850, slave raiding, warfare, and other means of enslavement did not cease.²⁵ Indeed, the level of enslavement remained at record highs throughout the nineteenth century.

Southeastern Africa also shared in the continued demand for slaves in the nineteenth century, and because the British blockade was first concentrated along the West African coast, the trade from southeastern Africa expanded to record levels. Whereas slaves were sent to the Mascarenes in the eighteenth century, only a few slaves found their way to Brazil and other parts of the Americas before 1815. Thereafter, departures increased, accounting for approximately 376,000 slaves between 1815 and 1866, when trans-Atlantic shipments effectively came to an end. Many of these slave exports came from relatively near the coast, particularly from the Zambezi valley. Where once *prazeros* had been content to trade into the interior for ivory, gold, and other goods, leaving the free people on their land alone, as long as they paid tribute, the *prazeros* now responded to the export demand and raided their subjects. Between 1818 and 1835, new men – many from Goa – assumed title to the Zambezi *prazos* and acquired quick fortunes through slave raiding. Other slaves came from further inland – the Shire valley and the region west of Lake Malawi. The net effect was to turn Quelimane into a major slave port.²⁶

The Scale of the Nonslave Trade

As the abolitionist movement succeeded in curtailing the movement of slaves to the Americas, some European countries attempted to circumvent the antislave trade conventions through various legalisms. The French and the Portuguese were the most serious offenders; the French labeled contract laborers, who were in fact slaves purchased in Africa, *engagés à temps*.²⁷ Their legal status allowed for their freedom after a specific period of fourteen years of servitude, but they left Africa as slaves and consequently, from an African perspective, must be included in the assessment of slave departures in the nineteenth century. The Portuguese terms were more varied – *libertos*, *serviçaes*, *livres*, and *ingênuos* – but they too were slaves. Technically, the contracts for these slaves ranged from five to seven and even ten years, but contracts could be bought and sold and lengthened without the consent of the *libertos*. The Dutch and British were cleverer still, given that both considered themselves leaders in the fight against slavery. Nonetheless, both countries found it convenient to recruit soldiers for the West Indies among the slave populations of Africa. The number of these recruits was small, a total of only a few thousand, but again they were originally slaves, no matter their status as British and Dutch soldiers (see Table 7.5).

The French initiated their disguised trade in slaves under the second empire of Louis Bonaparte, after 1848. The trade consisted of two sectors, with the first in western Africa, largely from Senegal and Gabon, to the West Indies.

TABLE 7.5. *The Scale of the Nonslave Trade: Contract and Other Forms of Servile Labor*

Carrier	Period	Volume	Origin
Dutch	1836–1862	2,500	Asante
French	1854–1862	20,400	West Africa
French	1848–1899	50,000	Southeast Africa
Portuguese	1860–1899	80,000	West-Central Africa
TOTAL		152,900	

Sources: Dutch: Joseph R. La Torre, “Wealth surpasses everything: an economic history of Asante, 1750–1874,” Unpublished PhD thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1978, 415, accounts for 1,170 slaves, P. C. Emmer (personal communication) has accounted for 2,490 slaves in his examination of the archives of the Dutch recruitment agency at Kumasi. I wish to thank Dr. Emmer for sharing this information with me. French: François Renault, *Libération d’esclaves et nouvelle servitude* (Abidjan: Nouvelles Éditions africaines, 1976), 158, 204–5. Portuguese: J. Duffy, *A Question of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 11–13, 27, 35, 98.

This trade accounted for the export of 20,426 slaves between 1854 and 1862 alone. The other sector was the trade from southeast Africa to Nossi Bé, the Comoros, and Reunion (Bourbon). Between 1848 and 1861, 33,958 slaves were brought into these islands in the Indian Ocean as *engagés*. Allowing for a mortality rate of 2 percent, probably 35,000 slaves left southeast Africa and Madagascar. These two periods are the best documented; perhaps 70,000 slaves were involved for the whole of the *engagé* period.²⁸

The Portuguese system of contract labor was centered on São Tomé and Príncipe, which benefited from a boom in coffee production in the late 1850s and later from the expansion of cocoa production too. In the 1850s, the legal trade in slaves from Luanda was virtually over, although some slaves were still dispatched from the mouth of the Congo River and at scattered places elsewhere on the west-central coast, such as Novo Redondo, Quicombo, Lobito, Bahia Farta, and some even south of Mossamides. Instead, Portuguese merchants began to ship slaves disguised as *libertos* to São Tomé and Príncipe, a few hundred at a time and sometimes under a decree that limited the legal number of such laborers to ten per ship. Under the watchful eyes and the repeated protests of the British, who had consular agents stationed in Luanda, this system gradually expanded until the mid 1860s, when upward of 1,000 *libertos* per year were being sent to the islands, virtually none of whom returned to the mainland after their terms of service were technically finished. According to official Portuguese statistics, 55,889 *libertos* were recorded for the 25 years from 1876 to 1900. The number of *libertos* varied from lows of 1,400 per year to as many as 8,000 per year. It is likely that the total trade from the late 1850s to 1900 was at least 80,000 *libertos*.²⁹

The Dutch portion of this emigration of slaves under other labels was small by comparison with the French and Portuguese sectors; its purpose was

different too. The Dutch recruited slaves in Asante between 1836 and 1842. They purchased 2,035 young men: 1,985 were then sent to the East Indies, and 50 were sent to the West Indies, mostly to serve as soldiers. Another 455 slaves were bought between 1858 and 1862 for the East Indies.³⁰

The Trans-Saharan and Red Sea Trade

The trade to the Islamic lands of North Africa and the Middle East involved the movement of about two million slaves in the nineteenth century. The largest portion of this trade was from the upper Nile valley basin and Ethiopia, which together probably accounted for one million slaves. About 650,000 slaves traveled across the Sahara from the savanna country to the west of the Nile valley, including the central and western Sudan. Another 347,000 slaves came from East Africa, and will be discussed in the next section.

Ethiopia and the Nile valley fitted into the general pattern of increased slave raiding and trade that prevailed in Africa, although the market was different. Routes fed the ports of the Red Sea and the desert caravans destined for Egypt. Perhaps more than half of the one million slaves from the region crossed the desert to Egypt, while the rest came from Ethiopia and were shipped to the Arabian Peninsula. The origin of this trade, as was the case for East Africa, can be traced to the eighteenth century. Dar Fur was capable of sending several thousand slaves per year north and east at the end of the century and continued to be a major source in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, although no caravan left Dar Fur between 1810 and 1817. Sennar, however, dispatched about 1,500 slaves per year during this period.³¹ The most important change occurred in the 1820s, when Egypt, which was nominally part of the Ottoman Empire but was in fact largely independent under the dynamic leadership of Muhammad Ali, invaded Sennar, fashioning an empire in the upper valley of the Nile.³² Egypt also seized ports along the Red Sea, so that Christian Ethiopia once more found itself threatened by an expansive Islamic power. Muhammad Ali and his successors were after gold, slaves, and other goods. The level of slave raiding rose considerably until 1880, when British pressure to abolish the slave trade undermined Egypt's strategy.

Muhammad Ali and his successors in Cairo wanted slave troops for the Egyptian army. In 1820, a training camp was established at Isna for officers of the slave regiments that were to be recruited through the conquest of the Nilotic Sudan. In the following year, a large depot was set up at Aswan to receive slaves, where they were vaccinated, clothed, and instructed in the rudiments of Islam. Muhammad Ali ordered 20,000 recruits, but the high rate of mortality during the desert crossing and in the recruitment camps from fever and dysentery sabotaged efforts to supply these numbers.³³ In 1822 and 1823, the figure was supposed to approach 30,000. Muhammad Ali spurred his troops on, reminding them in a special dispatch sent in 1823, "You are aware that the end of all our effort and this expense is to procure negroes.

Please show zeal in carrying out our wishes in this capital matter.”³⁴ The army subsequently organized raids outward from the northern Sudan in the quest for more and more slaves. Troops attacked the Shilluk and Dinka in the Nile flood plains to the south. They seized Kordofan in the west, and from there launched raids into the Nuba mountains. In the 1830s, an effort was made to reduce deaths on the desert crossing. The commander at Dongola constructed boats, with timber and nails sent from Egypt. This facilitated the movement of provisions for the slave convoys and allowed the transport of slaves along some stretches of the river. In the 1830s, the occupation forces were increased from one regiment to three, both to consolidate Egyptian rule and to expand slave-raiding operations. Muhammad Ali needed as many slaves as possible to assist in the conquest of Syria and Arabia. By 1838, an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 slaves were arriving in Egypt each year.³⁵

Under British antislavery pressure, Egyptian tactics had to change in the course of the 1860s and 1870s, but by then the vast network of Muslim merchants and raiders was able to maintain slave supplies, despite “official” opposition. In the 1860s, the Bahr el Jebel and Bahr el Ghazal regions were exporting 1,000 to 2,000 and 4,000 to 6,000 slaves per year, respectively, figures that are partially confirmed by the activities of the antislavery river patrols that seized more than 3,500 slaves between June 1864 and February 1866. Estimates for 1867 placed the total number of departures from the Sudan at between 10,000 and 30,000 per year, with half traveling overland down the Nile valley and the rest being sent to ports on the Red Sea. Merchants at Jedda on the Red Sea had agents at Shendi, Khartoum, Sennar, El Obeid, and at ports elsewhere on the Red Sea and the Somali coast, and thousands of slaves marched out of the Sudan and southern Ethiopia each year. From June 1878 to March 1879, 63 caravans with 2,000 slaves were seized at various places, and a government raid freed 1,000 at Kalaka, as the Egyptians, through British officials, retreated from the earlier policy of military recruitment. As late as 1876, the scale of the movement was thought to number tens of thousands per year, only now more were sent via the ports along the Red Sea than overland down the Nile valley and across the Sahara.³⁶

The efforts to reverse this slave trade in the Nilotic Sudan unleashed an Islamic revival that was anti-Egyptian and proslavery. A dynamic leader, Muhammad Ahmad, emerged as the focal point of resistance, when in 1881 he proclaimed himself the Mahdi, a messianic figure who was to purge the world of unbelief and, in this context, to end colonialism. The wars that followed did expel Egypt, along with its British and Ottoman supporters, from the Nilotic Sudan until 1896.³⁷ And as with other Muslim states in the central and western Sudan, the Mahdist government and its officials relied on slavery in production and in the military.

In Ethiopia, the Egyptian presence was also strong. Egyptian forces raided peripheral areas of the highlands and dominated the Red Sea, but most slaves here were seized in the south. The ports of Massawa, Tajura, Berbera, and Zeila

supplied thousands of slaves each year for Egypt and the Muslim holy lands in Arabia,³⁸ while caravans left the town of Metemma for the Nilotic Sudan. The Ethiopian slave trade was largely a trade in children, especially girls. Females outnumbered males by at least two to one, and the great majority of all slaves were younger than twenty years of age. These children came from areas to the south and southwest of Christian Ethiopia; the Galla and Sidama principalities obtained many of these children in slave raids on their weaker neighbors or in disputes among themselves. Many children were also kidnapped, and some undoubtedly were purchased in times of famine. A distinction was made between “red” slaves and “black” slaves, a difference relating to physical characteristics associated with various ethnic groups. In general, “red” slave girls were worth more in the export trade, whereas the “black” slaves, *shan-qalla*, were often retained in Christian Ethiopia, the Galla principalities, or the Muslim towns as menial laborers.³⁹ The Ethiopian trade peaked during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when as many as 6,000 to 7,000 slaves were sent each year through the various ports. For these 25 years, 150,000 to 175,000 slaves were dispatched.

Efforts to end the slave trade in North Africa and Arabia came much later than in the Atlantic basin. The Ottoman state outlawed the trade in the mid-1850s, and at about the same time Emperor Teodros of Ethiopia decreed a similar measure.⁴⁰ Neither decree had much effect. Only the direct intervention of the British in Egypt, with a corresponding presence in the Red Sea, resulted in pressure on the trade. The trade declined, particularly after the Mahdist revolt isolated the Sudan from the external world. Thereafter slaves were still smuggled across the Red Sea, but the scale was greatly reduced.

Various *jihads* in West Africa, particularly the one that led to the foundation of the Sokoto Caliphate after 1804, also resulted in the shipment of slaves across the Sahara. Perhaps a half-million or more slaves were involved in this traffic.⁴¹ The Sokoto Caliphate and neighboring Borno dispatched between 3,000 and 6,000 slaves per year from 1810 to 1870; in the 1870s, the trade dropped to a level of 1,000 to 2,000 per year; the scale declined further in the 1880s and 1890s. Other slaves were sent northward from Timbuktu, perhaps in the order of 1,000 to 2,000 per year for most of the century. Trade from Wadai and areas farther west was only a small proportion of the total movement of slaves to the Muslim world in the nineteenth century – certainly less than 10 percent of the total – but in fact this migration represented significant developments in West Africa, which had resulted in the enslavement of people on a scale comparable to other areas.

The East African Trade

The East African trade consisted of three sectors: a northern trade to Arabia, Persia, and India, a southern trade to the Americas and the Mascarenes, and a coastal trade that terminated at Zanzibar, Pemba, and several places on

TABLE 7.6. *East African Slave Departures to Arabia, Persia, and India, 1801–1896*

Period	Imports	Exports (9% mortality)
1801–1829	72,500	81,000
1830–1839	35,000	39,000
1840–1849	40,000	44,000
1850–1873	156,000	173,000
1874–1896	9,200	10,000
TOTAL	312,700	347,000

Source: Edmond B. Martin and T. C. I. Ryan, "A quantitative assessment of the Arab slave trade of East Africa," *Kenya Historical Review* 5 (1977), 71–91.

TABLE 7.7. *The Slave Trade of East Africa in the Nineteenth Century*

Sector	Number	%
Arabia, Persia, India	347,000	21.0
Southeast Africa	440,000	26.7
Mascarenes	95,000	5.8
East African coast	769,000	46.6
TOTAL	1,651,000	

Sources: Arabia, Persia, and India: Table 7.6. Southeast Africa: Eltis et al., *Slave Voyage Database*; Mascarenes: J. M. Filliot, *La Traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1974), 54 and Table 7.5; East African coast: Edmond B. Martin and T. C. I. Ryan, "A quantitative assessment of the Arab slave trade of East Africa," *Kenya Historical Review* 5 (1977), 82. Also see Austen, "The 19th century Islamic slave trade from East Africa (Swahili and Red Sea coasts): A tentative census," *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 28–31; Abdul Sheriff, *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar* (London: James Currey, 1987); Sheriff, "Localisation and social composition of the East African slave trade, 1858–1873," *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 131–45; Gwyn Campbell, "Madagascar and Mozambique in the slave trade of the western Indian Ocean 1800–1861," *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 166–93; and Hubert Gerbeau and Eric Saugera, eds., *La dernière traite: fragments d'histoire en hommage a Serge Daget* (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1994).

the mainland opposite these islands. Together these sectors involved the sale of almost 1,650,000 slaves, almost half of whom were retained on the East African coast and the other half sent elsewhere in the Indian Ocean or to the Americas (Tables 7.6 and 7.7). As these figures demonstrate, the slave trade boomed in the nineteenth century. Even though the export trade exceeded anything this region had ever experienced, the truly great expansion was related to developments on the coast itself.

The trade was on the order of 80,000 slaves in the first decade of the nineteenth century. At this time, about 30,000 slaves were retained on the coast; approximately 25,000 slaves were shipped north to Arabia, Persia, and India; another 25,000 people went to the Mascarenes; and the rest (10,000) were taken to the Americas. Thereafter, the Mascarene trade declined, but the American trade absorbed most of the slack, rising to 60,000 in the second decade and much higher in the third and fourth decades (100,000 per decade), before falling off to insignificant numbers in the late 1840s. The export trade to the north grew more modestly, rising to 35,000 in the 1830s, 40,000 in the 1840s, and 65,000 in both the 1850s and 1860s, before declining drastically after 1873. The retention of slaves on the coast increased from about 35,000 slaves in the 1810s to 40,000 in the 1820s, 60,000 in the 1830s, 147,000 in the 1840s, declining to 111,000 in the 1850s, climbing again to 142,000 in the 1860s, and finally reaching a high of 188,000 in the 1870s. Thereafter, this trade fell too, back to a level of 28,000 in the 1880s and 16,000 from 1890–1896.

The expansion of the slave trade on the coast was a result of the development of plantations at Zanzibar, Pemba, Malindi, Mombasa, and other places.⁴² Omani and Swahili planters invested in agriculture, growing cloves, coconuts, and grain for the international market. The staple export crop was cloves, grown on the islands and mostly exported to India. Previously, the Omani Arabs had been interested in the commercial prospects of the East African coast, including the slave trade, but the enterprising Sultan Sayyid Sa'id promoted a variety of crops of which cloves proved to be the most successful. This plantation development had many similarities with the slave plantation economies of the Americas and the Mascarene Islands. The emphasis was on the export crop, although grain production on the mainland became a subsidiary industry related to the clove and slave trade. The peak period in the growth of clove production was from the 1840s to the 1870s, which is reflected in the slave trade. The slave figures represent a tremendous increase in the use of slaves on the coast and hence are part of the growth in the employment of slaves within Africa, even though in this case many of the slave owners were initially from Oman.

This rapid growth of the East African slave trade involved considerable change in the interior.⁴³ Previously, the major route inland was via the Zambezi valley. Portuguese adventurers and their slaves were based on landed estates that were nominally granted by the Portuguese crown but in fact were recognized locally because the Portuguese often acted as mercenaries in African wars. Farther north, there had been few direct commercial links inland, but by the first decade of the nineteenth century, two groups of merchants from the interior were operating to the coast, bringing slaves and ivory. These were the Nyamwezi in the interior of Tanzania and the Yao who traded between the coast and Lake Malawi.

Most slaves who ended up in Zanzibar and Pemba came from Kilwa, which was the main receiving point for caravans from the Lake Malawi interior and for other ports farther down the coast. Slaves from the Kilwa hinterland formed a significant portion of the trade as early as 1811. By the 1840s, the importance of this source had increased even more; in 1860, 75 percent of Zanzibar's slaves came through Kilwa; by 1866, the percentage had risen to 95 percent.⁴⁴ Even after the trade to Zanzibar and its dependencies declined in the 1880s, the number of slaves traveling from the interior toward the coast continued unabated; only now they were destined for other plantations on the mainland. In the 1870s, thousands of slaves were reported crossing Lake Malawi on their way coastward. This pattern of internal migration continued until the end of the century.

There was also an active slave trade in the region immediately inland from Mombasa, Malindi, and Zanzibar, but only a quarter of the slaves on the plantations of Zanzibar and adjacent areas came from the interior of these places. Most slaves in the region of Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria never reached the coast. Instead, ivory was by far the most important export here. The trade in salt, copper, and imports from the coast reflects commercial patterns that were only distantly connected with the coastal plantation economy.

By the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, Swahili and Arab merchants also traded along these commercial corridors, and increasingly they extended credit to Nyamwezi and Yao traders too. The intensification of trade resulted in fierce competition inland, so that slave trading and slave raiding often went together. Merchants were heavily armed, and it proved impossible to check their aggression. The Nyamwezi responded by establishing centralized states under particularly dynamic warlords, but the efforts of such men as Msiri and Tippu Tip (whose father was Arab and his mother Nyamwezi) only redefined the commercial arrangements between the various commercial factions. Ultimately, the Nyamwezi, Yao, Swahili, and Arabs needed each other, because the enslavement of people, their movement to the coast, and their sale on the international slave market were all connected. The Portuguese and their warrior slaves, known as *achikunda*, provided the same functions in the south.⁴⁵

The slave raiding of the Nyamwezi, Yao, Portuguese, Swahili, Arabs, and *achikunda* was one major source of insecurity in the nineteenth century, but it was not the only one. By the 1820s, bands of armed men using short spears and well-disciplined tactics moved northward from southern Africa.⁴⁶ These regiments, part of the *difcane*, the "crushing," traced their origin to the rise of the Zulu in South Africa. As people were defeated by Zulu, they adopted Zulu military techniques and conquered new lands. These regiments moved north, destroying every established state they encountered and enslaving people in the Zambezi valley, the Rhodesian plateau, and parts of Tanzania. Between the combined impact of the *difcane* and the slave raiders from the coast, many

captives were seized. Warlordism had become the dominant feature of the East African interior from Tanzania to South Africa.

The decline in the number of slaves leaving East Africa did not immediately reduce the insecurity in the interior. British measures to force an end to the slave trade were relatively ineffective until the 1880s. Various diplomatic efforts had legally limited the coastal trade in stages that began with an agreement by Zanzibar in 1822 to prohibit the reexport of slaves north, which was not enforced. Not until after the abolition law of 1873 was there any real chance to implement abolition, and then not until the next decade did the trade actually fall off.⁴⁷

The Internal Trade

A recurrent theme in my discussion of the vicissitudes of the export trade has been the growth of an internal market for slaves – most notably the plantation sector on the East African coast, but elsewhere too. The scale of this domestic demand was probably as large, if not larger, than the scale of external markets. Together, the trade in slaves was larger than it had ever been, although it will never be possible to estimate the internal demand as accurately as the external. Nonetheless, the number of people who were bought and sold was considerable, which indicates that the supply of slaves was maintained and indeed augmented. Given that people born into slavery were seldom sold, the problem of supplying slaves on a large scale required new solutions to the eternal problem of the slave mode of production – how to find new sources of slaves.

To satisfy changes in external demand, the problem of slave supply was solved by shifting the geographical focus from the Atlantic rim to the Nile basin, Ethiopia, and East Africa. The far western coast of Africa became less important than previously; slave departures declined considerably as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century. The Bight of Biafra dropped out of the export trade in the late 1830s; the Bight of Benin continued for another two decades, but virtually all the Guinea coast above the equator was out of the trade by the middle of the century. West-central Africa lasted longer as a source for external markets, and after the 1850s, the use of slaves as contract labor continued the demand for slaves, although perhaps at only a fraction of the earlier numbers. By contrast, the East African trade grew rapidly in the 1820s and continued on a large scale through the 1870s. This trade primarily affected the Lake Malawi area and the Zambezi basin. Finally, the explosion in slave exports from the Nile valley and across the Red Sea took place from the 1820s through the 1870s. Thereafter, some slaves and contract workers continued to leave Africa, but only on a greatly reduced scale. By the 1880s, these markets for disguised forms of slavery had largely evaporated.

To some extent, internal demand for slaves benefited from the collapse in the export market; this is evident along the West African coast. Whereas slaves were numerous in local societies and in the towns along the coast before British

abolition, they became more numerous after slaves were no longer sent to the Americas. The development of palm oil production was based in part on slave labor, just as the growth of the plantation economy on the East African coast accounted for the majority of slaves traded there. As these cases demonstrate, the abolition of trans-Atlantic shipments of slaves enabled the possibility of using slaves closer to the source of enslavement. One reason that plantation agriculture became profitable was because it was no longer possible to satisfy trans-Atlantic demand in the face of the antislave trade blockade.

In many places, however, there was an increase in the demand for slaves within Africa without any strong links with the external market and its collapse. The *jihad* states of the northern savanna had little direct association with the foreign trade in slaves, although some slaves were in fact sent to the Americas from these states. The growth of slavery there was more related to internal factors. This expansion in the number of slaves can be followed with reference to the consolidation of each of the major *jihad* states – the Sokoto Caliphate after 1804, which incorporated much of the central Sudan; the caliphate of Hamdullahi (Masina) in the 1820s; Segu Tukolor under al-Hajj ‘Umar in the 1840s through the 1860s in the region between the Niger and the Senegambia; the Samorian state in the 1870s and 1880s to the south of Segu Tukolor; the Mahdist state in the 1880s; and Rabeh’s state in the 1890s in the Chad basin. This continuous string of *jihads* reverberated from the central Sudan westward and then eastward, doubling back toward the central Sudan at the end of the century. Some of the enslaved were exported (see earlier discussion), but the vast majority of newly enslaved were retained within these states or sold to neighboring countries for use there.

These *jihads* created a new slaving frontier on the basis of rejuvenated Islam. To a great extent, the Muslim reformers seized slaves from the masters of their enemies, thereby reenslaving many people and in the process reversing the process of slow acculturation and assimilation that had been a characteristic of slavery in the northern savanna. Many free people who resisted *jihad* were also enslaved, and the political and military mobilization based on religion enabled the expansion of the slaving frontier. Pagan populations that had been too distant from the centers of political power to suffer more than an occasional raid were now within the orbit of enslavement. The Sokoto Caliphate raided far to the south, eventually reaching the northern limits of the Congo River basin. The caliphate also intervened in the Yoruba wars through the intermediary of Ilorin, a dependent emirate under Gwandu.⁴⁸ Al-Hajj ‘Umar directed his wars against the pagan Bambara, although he was not averse to destroying Muslim commercial centers – such as Sinsani – when necessary, and he even defeated the caliphate of Hamdullahi, despite its own claim to legitimacy in terms of Islamic reform.⁴⁹ Samori and Rabeh, in their own regions, attacked Muslim and pagan populations alike; they both centered their movements in the southern parts of the savanna where strong Muslim states had previously not existed. Nonetheless, both destroyed Muslim regimes; for Samori, the most

notable Muslim state in his path was Kong, whereas Rabeh seized Bagirmi and Borno.⁵⁰ In all these cases, the problem of the enslavement frontier was solved. The call to reform was license for raiding Muslims and non-Muslims who did not heed the warning. In effect, *jihad* enabled both the raiding of people on an external frontier defined on the basis of religion and the seizing of people on an internal frontier who resisted the revolutionary movements.

This pattern of enslavement was institutionalized, as the case of the Sokoto Caliphate demonstrates.⁵¹ Once the caliphate was consolidated, dozens of emirates and sub-emirates recognized the authority of the twin capitals of Sokoto and Gwandu, but there were centers of independent rule scattered between these emirates. Some autonomous towns, such as Maradi, Abuja, and Argungu, were located within a very short distance of major caliphate cities – respectively, Katsina, Bida, and both Sokoto and Gwandu. Elsewhere, pockets of resistance offered other problems; the Ningi maintained an independent base between Kano and Bauchi and within striking distance of Zaria and several smaller emirates (Jema'are and Katagum). Despite the quest for the development of a pure theocracy, the Sokoto regime found it expedient to establish treaties with these enemies so that prisoners of war could be exchanged. A neutral market was maintained between Maradi and Katsina, for example, and another town between Zaria and Ningi, to the south of Kano, served the same purpose there. People could be ransomed at these towns, unless they were already slaves, but if no one came forward on behalf of a free person quickly, then enslavement was the result.

The various political regimes along the West African coast solved the problem of slave supply in equally ingenious ways, so that again new slaves came from a combination of an expanded catchment region and an internal supply mechanism. Asante, for example, attempted to maintain slave supplies through a combination of tribute and trade with the north. Tribute payments alone were on the order of 2,000 slaves per year around 1820; Gonja and Dagomba sent 500 each, Aduapem paid 300, and Takyiman, Wankyi, Atebubu, Abease, Kwawu, Akwamu, Fante, Ewe, and lesser dependencies contributed 700 in all.⁵² The trade with the north, through the market at Salaga principally, also brought in hundreds of slaves each year, perhaps more. Although the exact number cannot be assessed, data collected between 1837 and 1842 (see Table 7.8) allow some comparison of the origins of slaves.⁵³ In a sample of 657 slaves purchased by Dutch agents seeking army recruits, only 5 (0.8 percent) came from central Asante, whereas 142 (21.6 percent) came from the northern provinces (probably including slaves seized in raids by these provinces as well as people ethnically identified as Dagomba, Mamprussi, etc). The Mossi states were the biggest supplier, with 358 slaves (54.5 percent), whereas slaves who appear to have come from the Sokoto Caliphate (96 slaves, or 14.6 percent) were a distant second among external sources. Only 5 slaves (0.8 percent) came from the Juula commercial network to the northwest – a surprisingly small number

TABLE 7.8. *Origins of Male Slaves in Asante, 1837–1842*

Origin	Number	%
Akan and Ewe	5	0.8
Northern Asante	142	21.6
Mossi states	358	54.5
Northwest	5	0.8
Gurma area	51	7.7
Sokoto Caliphate	96	14.6
TOTAL	657	100.0

Sources: Joseph R. La Torre, “Wealth surpasses everything: an economic history of Asante, 1750–1874,” Unpublished PhD thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1978, 417–18, 420. It should be noted that La Torre’s ethnic classification has been adjusted. I have accepted an identification of “Marabu” with Hausa; Borno, Adamawa, Songhay, and Yoruba slaves are credited to the Sokoto Caliphate, because the main route for all these slaves would have been the same, and therefore these distinctions, although important, probably reflect the caliphate export trade. Northern Asante includes slaves who identified with Dagomba, Mamprussi, Gonja, and Wa. Gurma includes forty-eight slaves who identified as Gurma and three slaves from “northern Togo.” Akan and Ewe are grouped together as representing southern Asante; four slaves were Akan and one was Ewe.

considering the age-old links. The rest of the slaves came from the Gurma area, which was between the Mossi states and the Sokoto Caliphate.

These figures, despite the fact that they represent males only, are probably a good indication of the importance of northern slaves in Asante. Although the Sokoto Caliphate was far away, a significant percentage of slaves came from there and hence can be identified with the *jihad* of the central Sudan. Nonetheless, Asante temporarily solved the problem of slave recruits largely within the upper Volta basin, not from more distant places. At the end of the century, too, the northern region was the major supply area; at that time the Gurunsi country south of the Mossi states and west of Mamprussi was the chief supplier.⁵⁴ These figures demonstrate that Asante had successfully transferred the burden of enslavement to its northern provinces and adjacent countries.

The transfer of slaves through trade and tribute was considerable throughout the savanna and remained so until the last few years of the nineteenth century. This movement can be seen in the scattered reports of contemporary observers. In the 1850s, for example, Yola dispatched 1,000 slaves per year as tribute to Sokoto and received in turn an estimated 5,000 slaves from its own dependencies of Rai-Buba, Ngaundere, Bibemi, Tibati, Banyo, Koncha, Mania, and Madagali. This flow of new slaves does not account for many others – an unknown number – who were purchased by slave merchants. Undoubtedly

some of these slaves were sent across the Sahara, but many trade slaves were sold down the Benue and Niger or retained within the Sokoto Caliphate.⁵⁵

The wars of Samori and Babemba in the western Sudan involved the movement of slaves on a similar scale and at a time when the trans-Saharan trade no longer consumed as large a portion as in the Sokoto Caliphate in the 1850s. The French counted 1,183 slaves (776 women and 407 men) in caravans passing through Bamako in a seven-month period in 1885.⁵⁶ Four years later, some 2,000 slaves were sold at Medine in the course of several months. Both figures attest to the continued transfer of slaves on a massive scale.⁵⁷

The Yoruba states satisfied the problem of slave supply through warfare and through the purchase of slaves from their northern interior. The Yoruba wars, already discussed earlier, were the major cause of enslavement, but the jihad in the central Sudan also resulted in a considerable movement of slaves south, as the proportion of slaves at Abeokuta and other towns who identified as Muslim or Hausa makes clear. The wars had the effect, comparable to that of the *jihads*, of creating an internal frontier of enslavement, whereas the northern trade, connected to the Sokoto Caliphate, secured slaves from an external frontier. Especially in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Yoruba merchants traveled to Ilorin to buy slaves.⁵⁸ The political difficulties between Ibadan, Abeokuta, Dahomey, and other powers upset this exchange of slaves in some years, but the net effect was the immigration of many northern slaves into the region where the production of palm oil was important.

The principal mechanism for enslavement among the Igbo was internal: raids, kidnapping, and religiously sanctioned enslavement.⁵⁹ There were routes to the north and along the Niger River that accounted for the arrival of slaves; there are reports of Hausa and Muslim slaves along the Niger by the 1830s, for example. Nonetheless, the Igbo frontier was largely internal, as the reports of kidnapping from late in the century make amply clear. The lack of political centralization prevented a coordinated effort to limit local enslavement; rather, some raids and other acts of enslavement for alleged criminal offenses were a necessary consequence of a political order that relied on methods of adjudication other than through state structures. Practices that relied on secret societies and masquerade appear to have been common during the peak of the slave trade. Enforcement through politically sanctioned methods could result in collective punishment and enslavement. Moreover, kidnapping, which most people condemned but which nobody could stop, was rife.

The common theme in west-central and eastern Africa was the maintenance of slave supplies through the activities of marauding warlords; in short, the enslavement frontier was constantly pushed outward as new waves of invaders devastated whole regions, sometimes following in the tracks of earlier warlords.⁶⁰ The Cokwe destroyed Lunda; the Arabs and Swahili pushed into the lakes region and beyond; the *difecane* moved north from South Africa; the Jellaba raided southward from the Nile valley; and the Chikunda attacked up the Zambezi. Unlike the other areas, there was no viable internal mechanism of

slave supply; the customs of kin-based societies permitted people to define all non-kin as outsiders and hence potentially slaves. Small groups of marauders could act on their own account, treating everyone as enemies. In this way, a steady stream of slaves was available for export to the coast and for distribution within the subcontinent itself. These bands also incorporated captives.

The supply of slaves, therefore, continued in a continent that had already suffered from the massive deportation of slaves for several centuries. The problem of supply was solved through internal mechanisms that redefined frontiers across which it was acceptable to seize captives. This adjustment was necessary so long as slavery continued to be important. Frontiers were created in various ways: the movement of slavers into new areas, the redefinition of people as enemies within regions where slaves had long been common, the increase in political insecurity or illegal activities such as kidnapping, and the invasion of marauders who had no local identity and hence did not care about injustice. These aspects of enslavement and the related slave trade were essential to the further transformation of slavery in the nineteenth century. In those areas where a slave mode of production already existed, a continual influx of slaves was necessary to sustain the slave population; in other areas, a slave mode of production developed where previously there had only been a few slaves.

Slavery and “Legitimate Trade” on the West African Coast

The collision between a Europe that was increasingly, if sometimes reluctantly, committed to the end of slavery and an African political economy rooted in slavery was most pronounced along the coast of West Africa in the nineteenth century. Here slavery had been transformed into an institution affecting the very structure of society, at least in Sierra Leone, along the Gold Coast, and in the Bights of Benin and Biafra. There continued to be areas in Liberia and western Ivory Coast where slavery was relatively marginal, but for the most part the social formation included a mode of production based on slavery, despite great variations between particular slave systems. Occasionally, slave regimes modified specific practices to assuage the principles of missionaries and European diplomats, but more often the antislavery forces themselves compromised. Europeans had to tolerate and sometimes openly support slavery to achieve aims other than the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, unless European public opinion was a factor.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the export trade in slaves from West Africa continued well into the nineteenth century, with the volume being particularly high until the 1840s. By 1866, 1,350,000 people had embarked on slave ships in the Bights of Benin and Biafra and the long stretch of coast from the mouth of the Volta River to the Senegambia. The Bights alone accounted for 940,000 slaves, or 70 percent of the total. This trade indicates one feature of slavery in coastal West Africa during the nineteenth century: Departures of slaves continued to have an important influence on the region, so that domestic slavery was still under the umbrella of external demand. This meant that institutions of enslavement and slave trading continued to function, despite British efforts to interfere in ocean shipping.

Slavery and “Legitimate Trade”

Nonetheless, there were changes in the export trade that reflected a fundamental reorientation in the economy of the West African coast, for here the shift to agricultural exports, particularly palm oil and palm kernels, but also gum Arabic and other goods –products of “legitimate trade” – resulted in the use of many slaves in local economies.¹ Slaves became the largest component in the agricultural labor force, and they served as porters and canoe men to transport “legitimate” goods to market. This more intensive use of slaves in trade and production occurred despite the location of the British navy off the coast. Established patterns of slave trading had to be altered, but the proximity of the area to Europe also meant that areas close to the coast could benefit from the demand for agricultural goods. The fight against the slave trade, the shift to “legitimate” commodities, and the consolidation of European outposts in Sierra Leone, on the Gold Coast, at Lagos, in the Niger delta, and at Fernando Po were elements of the shift from slaves as an export to exporting “legitimate” commodities, but the transition from slaves to commodities did not result in the decline of slave trading and slavery within the coastal zone.

The export trade in “legitimate” commodities accounts for many of the slaves used in production and commerce in the West African coastal region in the nineteenth century, but not all of them. Internal commercial patterns included the export of kola nuts to the savanna, the production of foodstuffs for local consumption and regional distribution, and the mining of gold. Slaves were sometimes used in these activities. Slaves were also needed as porters in caravans and to man the crews on riverboats in these sectors, because transportation was so labor intensive.

Slaves became increasingly important in production, sometimes in large concentrations and other times in small holdings. Slaves lived in their own villages and on plantations to produce agricultural goods, including palm oil and kernels, rice, yams, and other crops. These plantations were found near the coast and along the rivers of Sierra Leone, in Asante, Dahomey, and the Yoruba states, and at scattered locations in the Biafra interior. Small holdings were found almost everywhere. Sometimes slaves were owned jointly by lineages as a result of inheritance or cooperative purchase, and other times individuals bought one or two slaves to assist on their farms. This pattern had existed previously, only now, more than ever before, slave-produced commodities were sold on the market. The greater commercialization associated with “legitimate” trade and with the growth of the domestic economy more generally was part of the final stage in the consolidation of a slave mode of production. Ironically, this transformation occurred at a time when the agents of abolition hovered on the edges of the political economy. The system of slavery would be dismantled, but the characteristic feature of the nineteenth century was the full development of slavery as a productive and social institution.

The use of slaves in nonproductive capacities (military, government, marriage) continued unabated, even as productive employment increased in scale. Slaves were still used as soldiers throughout this region, so that slave recruits were crucial in the control of the plantation sector and the peasantry at large, as well as in the enslavement of foreign enemies. Deliberately or not, the employment of slaves in the army prevented the consolidation of slave consciousness, while continued military action made flight more difficult by reducing the areas where it was safe to be. The assimilation of female slaves and children also did not change significantly. Women swelled the households of the wealthy for the same reasons as before. Without the safeguards of kinship, they were more dependent than free wives. As before, the status of slave wives and their children was allowed to improve, despite occasional limitations on access to land, credit, and other rights derived from lineage membership.

The myth for all slaves, whether they were actually incorporated into households or confined to plantations, was that individuals were to be assimilated. Culturally, they had to adopt the master's language and respect his mores. Failure to adapt could result in punishment, sale, even death at a funeral of a wealthy man looking for victims to accompany him into the next world. Nonetheless, the scale of slavery in most areas was so great that real assimilation was impossible for many people. In parts of Asante, Dahomey, the Yoruba states, and the Biafra interior, slaves formed a majority of the population and were classified as separate from free society. Kinship terms could be used to govern slave-master relations, but slaves were not kin. Kinship operated to protect the free and to regulate the status of slaves and pawns. It provided access to land, labor, and religious shrines and ceremonies, and hence governed virtually every aspect of society. Those who traced their descent through a free father in patrilineal societies or through a free mother in matrilineal ones belonged to the class of free men and women. This class was subdivided into the wealthy and politically powerful men (and a few women) on the one hand, and the majority of free commoners on the other.

Some slaves who attained military and government positions accumulated slaves of their own, but they acquired these slaves as dependents themselves. These elevated slaves almost formed a caste of high-ranking slave officials in some places. This exception to the general subordination of slaves to the free population indicates that in unstable political conditions and periods of economic transition, enterprising individuals who were protected by the wealthiest and strongest political leaders could take advantage of personal opportunities to change their status. In no way did the existence of large slave owners among people of slave origin endanger the operation of these societies. In some situations, kinship rules were adjusted to incorporate a particular person, and his descendants joined the ranks of the master class. Nonetheless, there were two clearly defined classes, slave and free, with the free subdivided into a commercial-political elite and commoners.

The Western Coast and Asante

The sharp drop in slave departures from the stretch of coast westward of the Volta River to Sierra Leone meant that many slaves who otherwise would have been sent to the Americas were added to the local population. This demographic shift required a serious adjustment in the coastal economy, as the rapid increase in the servile population, particularly along the Sierra Leone coast and the Gold Coast, encouraged the expansion of productive activities. This economic adjustment enabled investment in production. The availability of slave labor enabled merchants and political leaders to find employment for new slaves; their success largely accounts for the continued prosperity along the Upper Guinea coast and in Asante.

The Sierra Leone region offered no coordinated response to European pressure against the slave trade. The only major state in the area was Futa Jallon, centered in the highlands in the interior, and despite slave revolts in the late eighteenth century there, the Futa Jallon economy continued to be based on slavery. On the coast itself, the decentralized political structure was one reason that the British and the Americans could found colonies for freed slaves at Freetown and Monrovia. The location of these settlements and the use of Freetown by the British antislave-trade squadron transformed this stretch of coast into a potential bridgehead in the struggle against slavery. The slaves seized on the high seas were liberated at Freetown, and many converted to Christianity and eventually returned to their homelands to assume an active role in local changes that helped undermine slavery. Similarly, the ex-slaves who came to Liberia from the United States were Christians with a commitment to freedom, even if they proceeded to establish a political order that discriminated against local people.²

Therefore, along this stretch of coast, which had once accounted for the export of many thousands of slaves per year, one might have expected to find that slavery was a marginal institution. In fact, the opposite was true. Instead, local conditions that included the extensive use of slaves in trade and production prevented the spread of antislavery sentiments until late in the century. Rather than press the issue of abolition, the British and the freed slaves accommodated themselves to the slave societies of the coast. Freetown, as its name suggests, was a bridgehead against slavery, but there was no victory there. Indeed, it was not until 1928 that slaves were freed in the Protectorate of Sierra Leone, despite the presence of the British in Freetown for 130 years.³ Nor did Liberia, despite its name, stand for the liberty of slaves, other than those from the United States. There were fewer slaves in Liberia than elsewhere along the coast, but this lower proportion had little, if anything, to do with the presence of freed slaves from the United States.

Among the Sherbro, slaves were employed on plantations to grow food-stuffs and to produce palm oil. The Ya Kumba clan, for example, owned land

along the Kagboro River, south of Freetown, where they had developed a salt industry. The salt was shipped inland to purchase slaves from Susu merchants, and these slaves were then employed in the cultivation of cassava. The mulatto offspring of Portuguese and English merchants also owned considerable numbers of slaves, who were settled on plantations along the coast. The Caulkers were one such family, descended from Thomas Corker, an agent of the Royal African Company who was stationed on the coast in 1684, and a ranking woman of the Ya Kumba clan, which owned land on the coast.⁴

A similar concentration of slaves existed in neighboring areas, but not everywhere. The crucial variable appears to have been the extent of trade with the interior. Along the Upper Guinea coast, there was regular trade inland, with salt, rice, and imported European merchandise sent inland and slaves, kola, and palm produce brought to the coast. Hence among the Mende, who participated in this exchange, perhaps half the population at the end of the nineteenth century was slave, many of whom were settled on plantations, where they grew food and gathered palm products for transport to the coast.⁵ Along the Mellacouri and other rivers, where the Susu and Temne lived, a similar concentration of slaves existed, and again slaves were often on plantations, in this case collecting kola for sale to the coast or growing rice for export inland.⁶ Further down the coast, the Vai, who numbered only 15,000 or so, were largely a slave society; estimates indicate that three-quarters of the population was slave.⁷ By contrast, among the Kru of the Liberia coast, there was far less contact with the interior, and consequently there was less opportunity to acquire the wealth that could be invested in slaves. On this stretch of coast, there were relatively low proportions of slaves in the population; there do not appear to have been any plantations like those on the Sierra Leone coast. This same pattern characterized most of the Ivory Coast too, except for areas at the mouths of the Bandama and Comoe Rivers, where again there were routes inland.⁸

Asante and its dependencies on the Gold Coast also experienced the economic adjustment required by the shift from slave exports to the sale of other products early in the century. Here, the system of trade centered on European trade castles at Cape Coast, Elmina, and other places made it difficult to smuggle slaves.⁹ Some slaves were taken farther west, but Asante was forced to abandon the slave export business. The crisis of adjustment was profound. Some slaves were added to the population around the capital at Kumasi, but the concentration of slaves became so great that many were executed as war prisoners, there being no export market for them. By 1820, at a time when departures from the Bights of Benin and Biafra were at an all-time high, Asante was diverting its slave population into kola production and gold mining. The response is instructive, moreover, because it reveals a pattern that was to characterize much of Africa, not only other parts of the West African coast. Slaves were available in such numbers that their employment in the domestic economy was logical, indeed a necessity.

Asante is not usually mentioned as an example of an African country that responded to the pull of "legitimate trade." Usually the designation "legitimate trade" is reserved for palm oil and peanuts, not gold and kola nuts. Gold had long been exported from Africa and hence did not represent a new departure in the export economy, whereas kola nuts were sold within Africa and not to Europe. Nonetheless, both goods were similar to palm oil, peanuts, wild rubber (which experienced a boom at the end of the nineteenth century), and other goods. Despite local consumption, both gold and kola commanded an international market and provided alternatives to the export of slaves. Furthermore, gold and kola nuts, like palm oil and peanuts, were closely related to the increased employment of slaves within domestic economies. The requirements for slave labor varied with each product and between different producing areas, but slavery and the economy were intimately connected.

Slavery in Asante and the adjacent areas on the Gold Coast was a complicated institution, with many variations in the treatment of slaves and the scale of slave concentration. On the one hand, the matrilineal Akan were divided between those who were subjects of Asante and those who were not. On the other hand, in parts of Asante, the subjects were not even Akan or matrilineal. The northern provinces in particular had a large population of Muslims, and practices among these people were different from those of the Akan. In effect, Asante had two sets of laws relating to slaves: one pertained to Akan owners and the other to Muslims. Both groups of slave owners cooperated in maintaining the strength of the Asante state and their supremacy over the enslaved population.

From their commercial towns along the edge of the forest and in the savanna farther north, Muslims continued to export kola nuts, gold, and other goods with which Asante was able to finance the import of textiles, livestock, salt, leather goods, and many other products, including slaves. Muslims employed slaves in their commercial establishments. Slaves were also needed to carry firewood and fetch water, because at some towns, particularly Salaga, the water supply was inadequate during the peak season of caravan trade. They gathered fodder for the livestock of visiting merchants and ran errands for itinerant merchants as well as their masters. Many slaves lived on plantations around the towns, where they grew crops that fed the large caravans of merchants. Given that slave masters, in their capacity as commercial brokers, housed and fed visiting traders free of charge, plantation output was a necessary feature of the successful business activities of the Muslim commercial population. The largest plantations around Salaga and Bonduku had several hundred slaves each. For much of the nineteenth century, Muslims were also resident to the southwest of the Volta River, in the area bordering on the forests where kola nuts were harvested.

The French reconnaissance officer, L.-G. Binger, passed through Salaga in 1888, fourteen years after the province of Gonja had asserted its independence

from Asante but still soon enough afterward to demonstrate the pattern of plantation development that characterized this important commercial center. Binger first reached the slave plantation of Dokonkade, to the north of Salaga:

Dokonkade is a village of between 400 and 500 inhabitants and is a place of agricultural importance. Many people from Salaga are settled there with their captives during the winter months. A small market is set up there where one can buy food-stuffs: naturally, potatoes are the most popular, as in the whole region. Sorghum is not sold at market, but one has simply to approach an inhabitant to get some easily and cheaply.... Going from Masaka to Salaga, one does not go through any villages but passes near Belimpe or Bourompe, Abd-er-Rahman-iri, Gourounsi-iri and other small farming communities dependent upon Salaga – villages of captives engaged in farming under the surveillance of a member of the master's family. These assume the name of their owner, adding *iri*, *sou*, *pe* or *kade*, depending on whether they speak Dagomsa, Mande or Gonja; the suffix in each of the three languages means "villages, habitation".¹⁰

Another French officer, Benquey, reported on Bonduku in 1904, some thirty years after Gyaman had asserted its independence from Asante, that many slaves worked in the fields alongside their master:

For the Abron and above all for the Kulango agriculturalist, a slave is an assistant who enables him to increase the area he cultivates or who lessens the burden of heavy field work. The master himself works alongside his captives. A sort of intimacy which lessens the distinctions between them and renders the captive a servant rather than a slave grows out of their daily contact.¹¹

These conditions indicate relatively small-scale production by peasants and their slaves. Among the Muslim merchants, however, Benquey found that the situation was very different; again plantations were common:

Among the Dioula [Juula, i.e., Muslim merchants], on the contrary, there is no contact between masters and captives. The latter, dispatched to cultivator villages, have but little to do with their masters. The Dioula man is above all else a merchant eager to gain, seeking to draw the greatest possible profit from everything that can be bought or sold. Now the slave is ... an easy investment and the source of considerable profit. Therefore, to the Dioula merchant, the slave is a piece of merchandise to which he gives the same consideration he would an ox or sheep.¹²

In Bonduku and elsewhere in Gyaman some farmers had few slaves while others had plantations with much larger slave holdings.

Further south, in the central Akan areas of Asante, slavery was cast in a different mould. The matrilineal Akan were organized into eight great clans that dominated the Asante government. Muslim contingents were organized for the army, and Muslim advisers were usually important in government circles, but the real political battles in Asante were between the different clans. The issue of slavery was an important aspect of this political rivalry. Different clans tried to bolster their position by acquiring the two most important capital resources

in Asante: gold and slaves. The king, in a perpetual struggle to assert and maintain the primacy of the state, confiscated gold through inheritance taxes, but slaves remained in the hands of the lineages that comprised each clan and could not be touched. Hence, slaves were a particularly valuable investment, more especially because slaves were employed in mining or panning gold. J. Dupuis, the British ambassador to Asante in 1820, learned:

On the banks of the Barra [Ba], a river whose source is near the great Muslim city of Kherabi and which flows south to join the Tando or Assinia river [actually the Comoe], the Gyaman also practice gold-washing, and my informants relate that during the rainy season there is work for eight to ten thousand slaves for two months.¹³

Slaves could assist in the harvesting of kola nuts, and they could be used as porters in the transport of kola to the north or other goods to the coast. R. La T. Lonsdale, a British intelligence officer who traveled extensively in Asante and its former province in the early 1880s, reported that “the traders in all the regions of the interior mostly use slaves as porters.”¹⁴ Wealthy traders and officials, as well as corporate groups, owned slaves, but despite the ability of individuals to acquire large numbers, the tendency was toward corporate ownership by lineages. This was so for two reasons. First, lineages inherited the slaves of wealthy individuals, whereupon the slaves then belonged corporately to the person’s maternal relatives. Second, different sections of lineages – often maternal brothers – banded together to buy a slave or two at a time. Because access to the kola groves was related to lineage membership, the kola was treated as a virtually free good by lineage members. All that was needed was to pick the kola, sort and package it, and carry it to market. Women and slaves did much of this work, except in the major harvest, when everyone participated. Through inheritance and this kind of corporate activity, lineages acquired dependent lineages of slave origins that were liable to work for the corporate group.

In the early nineteenth century, the slave population of central Asante, particularly in the area around the capital, Kumasi, had become so large that the government feared a slave revolt. Whole villages of slaves had been established to populate this district and to supply food for the army. Thomas Bowdich, who visited Kumasi in 1817, learned that:

The higher class could not support their numerous followers, or the lower their large families, in the city and therefore employed them in plantations (in which small crooms [villages] were situated), generally within 2 or 3 miles of the capital, where their labours not only feed themselves but supply the wants of the chief, his family and the more immediate suite. The middling orders station their slaves for the same purpose and also to collect fruit and vegetables for sale, and when their children become more numerous, a part are generally sent to be supported by these slaves in the bush.¹⁵

John Beecham, another British commentator on the Asante scene, also mentions the existence of a plantation sector using slave labor:

The large towns of Ashantee contain a considerable population.... The towns of this part of Africa are surrounded by a number of plantations belonging to the inhabitants;

and the natives always include the slaves on those plantations in their estimates of population of the towns to which they are attached.¹⁶

Beecham based his information on the reports of a Methodist missionary who visited Kumasi in 1839. It is clear that at this date plantations were an established feature of the rural economy.

Agricultural policy was related to the collapse in the export trade for Asante. After 1807, slave departures fell sharply, although the acquisition of slaves through tribute and war had not reduced the number of slaves flowing into Asante. The agricultural development of the central district was one solution to the redeployment of slaves who otherwise would have been exported. The Kumasi district was not an area where kola nuts were produced; hence it appears that the government policy was partially makeshift. Slaves may have been settled there first in anticipation that they would be sold if trade revived, but subsequently many were settled in the provinces. Bowdich thought that this policy

was particularly consolatory and beneficial to those slaves who, to prevent famine and insurrection, had been selected (from that fettered multitude which could no longer be driven off to the coast directly they arrived at the capital) to create plantations in the more remote and stubborn tracts; from which their labour was first to produce a proportionate supply to the household of their chief, and afterwards an existence for themselves.¹⁷

By 1820, when several diplomatic missions from England made it clear to the Asante government that the trade would not resume, the decision was made to disperse this slave population throughout the country, particularly to areas where gold was produced and kola harvested. The Asante government achieved the redistribution of slaves in two ways. First, it openly encouraged the acquisition of slaves through implementation of commercial policies, inheritance taxes, and other measures that favored small producers, particularly lineage segments. Second, it protected rules governing matrilineal inheritance so that the slave holdings of wealthy officials and merchants were dispersed among kin rather than retained in a single bloc close to the capital or other places where merchants and officials had located their holdings. Hence it appears that Asante pursued a conscious policy that was designed to adjust to the end of the export trade in slaves. Instead, gold and kola resources were developed, using slave labor through the medium of the clans and their subordinate lineages, as an alternative to slave exports.¹⁸

Estimates of the servile population of Asante are understandably impressionistic, but scattered reports indicate that a substantial portion of the population was slave or pawn. Most observers visited the major centers and followed the principal routes from the coast into the interior; hence the reports are most accurate on these places. Estimates ranging from 60 to 90 percent of the population are likely to be too high, but in the early 1870s, the population of the

Kumasi area was thought to be about equally slave and free. On the coast, the ratio of slave to free was at least as high. This assessment for late in the century is probably roughly accurate for the early decades of the nineteenth century too. This is partially confirmed by the policy of the Asante government in dispersing slaves throughout the countryside after 1820 to check the growth of the slave population near the capital. But this policy did not eliminate large concentrations of slaves, either there or elsewhere.¹⁹ If the estimates of the size of the slave population are even roughly accurate, then some wealthy merchants and government officials had large holdings involving many hundreds and perhaps thousands of slaves. Gold mining continued to be work for slaves, and this sector of the economy was so important to the central government that conditions in the mines were probably strictly controlled. It was not an easy job, because pits caved in frequently and had to be dug anew after each rainy season. Deaths were common among the thousands of slaves involved in this vital sector.

Asante attempted to plan its economy through the deployment of slaves in agriculture and mining to cushion the country from the effects of the abolition of the export trade in slaves to the Americas and to accommodate the large-scale arrival of slaves into the state through tribute, trade, and war. This policy involved making slaves available to the lineages, so that the common people had a stake in the perpetuation of the state in a period of economic transition. Lineages acquired slaves through trade, particularly in kola nuts. To safeguard the opportunity to buy slaves, the government restricted the movement of foreign merchants, confining them principally to Salaga, northeast of the Volta River. Kola producers, usually a few related kin and their slaves, transported kola to Salaga, where they obtained better prices for their kola than would have been the case if foreign merchants had been allowed to travel into the production zone. Higher profits from kola sales were matched by lower prices for slaves at the Salaga market.²⁰ This policy assured a steady influx of slaves that would benefit the lineages. It also guaranteed the prosperity of the Muslim sector in the north, with merchants and local government officials there able to acquire many slaves of their own for use on plantations and in other capacities.

The corollary to this economic policy was the perpetuation of customs that limited the cultural assimilation of slaves into Akan society. Slaves who had been purchased in the north could not themselves experience full integration into Akan society. They seldom lost their accent, and they usually were marked with facial and body scars that set them off from free Akan who had no such markings. Legally, these slaves could not inherit land or other property because they had no kinship link with a matrilineage. Nor could they perform religious rites that were associated with the ancestors. These disabilities did not disappear in the course of a lifetime, but the myth of Asante slavery, supported by custom and government action, held out the possibility of assimilation for the

descendants of slaves. The truth was that full assimilation took several generations and was fraught with great difficulties. Matrilineal rules required that a person's mother be free and have brothers or other relatives whose property and access to land could eventually be inherited. The children of slave women, whether the husband was slave or free, had no such connection, and throughout their lives they remained second-class citizens at the sufferance of the lineage that owned them. They normally would not be sold, but they could be pawned if the family fell into debt. Culturally, they were indistinguishable from free men, and it was both impolite and illegal to refer to their slave ancestry. Nonetheless, they lacked many legal and property rights, and their children often fared no better. The result was that many villages were inhabited by both free and slave, but only those who traced their ancestry through a line of free women controlled land distribution, made decisions over pawning, or managed joint investments in trade. The policy of cultural assimilation effectively prevented the consolidation of class consciousness among the servile population, but it did not result in the full integration of slaves into society.²¹

To the west of Asante, among the Baule refugees who had fled after the fall of Denkyira and other Akan states in the eighteenth century, slavery was on a much smaller scale.²² The Baule seized people in raids, and they bought slaves from Muslim merchants in the north as well as from their Guro, Senufo, and Dida neighbors, but rarely were slave holdings very large. Like other Akan, the matrilineal Baule wanted slaves to work in the fields, to serve as porters, and to bear children. Because there were usually only a few slaves in each family, it was relatively easy to incorporate them. Slaves worked alongside free people, and they were openly encouraged to identify with Baule culture. The bands of refugees who moved westward in the eighteenth century successfully displaced the Dida, Senufo, and Guro, incorporating many of these earlier inhabitants into Baule society through the institution of slavery. Indeed, these non-Akan were particularly attractive candidates for purchase and capture because they came from patrilineal societies. In this case, the matrilineal rules of the Baule provided a convenient justification for captivity. The Guro, Dida, and Senufo lacked the legitimate matrilineal links to the original refugee groups. They could become Baule, but they remained dependents for generations, until time had erased memories of slave ancestry and cultural distinctions that might endanger Baule domination. The Baule had to be concerned about their survival. They had lost out to Asante in the struggle for control of their homelands. Through the institution of slavery, they increased their numbers and guaranteed that they would not lose their newly acquired lands in the east.

On the periphery of the Baule country, along the coast between the Comoe and Bandama Rivers, were fishing villages and salt-making camps that supplied the interior in exchange for foodstuffs, cloth, and slaves.²³ These communities had sold some slaves to Europeans during the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the people at the mouth of the Bandama River shifted

to the palm-oil trade in response to the rise in demand. The relative prosperity from this trade made it possible for these merchants – the Alladian – to buy many slaves, so that there were larger concentrations than among the Baule or other people of the interior. The Alladian traded up the Bandama River to the town of Tiassale, which was the major staging point for trade with the Baule and with Muslim merchants from the savanna. The Alladian needed porters and field hands, and some merchants had as many as sixty or seventy slaves. By comparison with slavery elsewhere along the West African coast, these holdings were relatively small. Nonetheless, the scale of slavery here was still significant and suggests that the possibility of incorporation, which characterized slavery among the Baule and many Akan, was difficult.

Dahomey and the Yoruba States

Slavery was as important in Dahomey and the Yoruba states to the east as it was in Asante.²⁴ These states continued to supply slaves for shipment to the Americas through the 1840s, and the scale of the trade, although greatly reduced after mid-century, continued at a level of several thousand per year until 1866. More significantly, slaves were used in the domestic economy on an unprecedented scale. Here the shift to “legitimate trade” involved the production of palm oil and its transport to the coast. Both the production and the transport were almost exclusively the work of slaves, and this required thousands of field hands and porters. Hence one aspect of slavery in this area was the concentration of slaves in the hands of relatively few owners. The plantation economy and the movement of freight by slave porters required the restructuring of the domestic economy. Slave owners emerged not only among the ranks of government officials and the state itself, but also among merchants, both native and foreign.

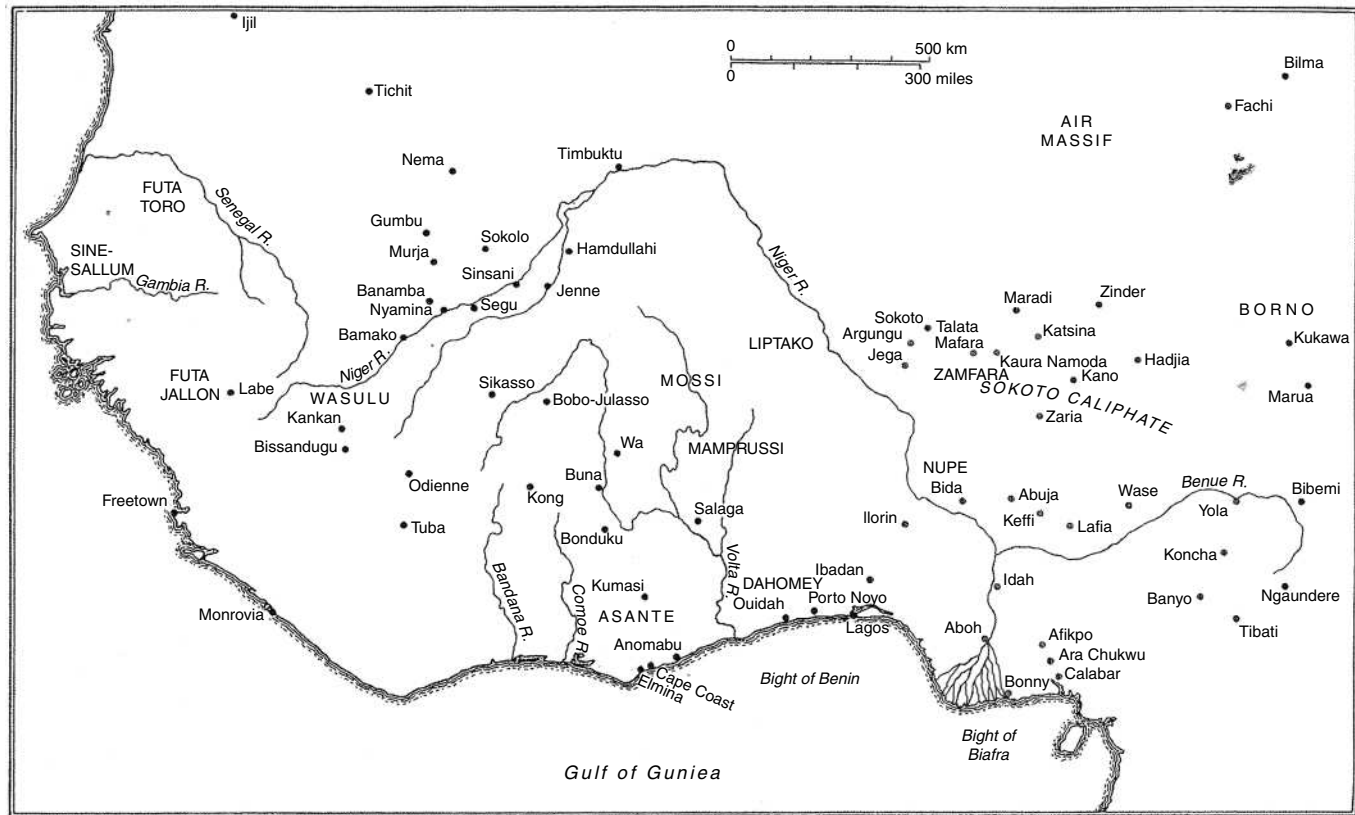
As in the Akan provinces of Asante, the legal setting for slavery emphasized kinship structures. Marriage contracts, access to land, cooperation in defense, and religious beliefs were conceived of in terms of genetic relationships. Unlike Asante, however, kinship rules were governed patrilineally, not matrilineally, and this difference affected the basic ideology. Practices varied because the male line was the important connection, and these distinctions required an emphasis on paternity that affected the institution of slavery. Children of slave women were technically free, as long as the father was free. The emphasis on owning domestic slaves, including newly acquired slave women and slave children, was on their incorporation into the family unit as they became acculturated and proved their loyalty. The trend, as in Asante, was toward the assimilation of these slaves, and the social myth about slavery held that assimilation was proper and inevitable, as long as slaves, particularly their descendants, complied with the cultural expectations of society. Once slaves or the children of slaves had become culturally assimilated, they could expect to be treated as full members of the family.

This was the way slavery was supposed to function. The actual practice was quite different. Slave holdings in Dahomey and the Yoruba states of Ibadan, Ijebu, Abeokuta, and Lagos were so large that free people constituted only a minority of the population, particularly by the middle of the nineteenth century. Individual warlords and wealthy merchants, including a few women also, amassed hundreds, even thousands of slaves, far too many to assimilate into their kinship groups. Because slave masters were primarily concerned with success in war and the functioning of the market, they largely ignored traditions and laws that encouraged the incorporation of slaves and their gradual emancipation. A few individuals could be rewarded through the extension of kinship rights, and children of slave women by free fathers could expect better treatment than children of slave unions. Full assimilation was also difficult because of divisions within the slave-owning class. Some masters were Muslim, others were Christian, and many were associated with *orisha* worship. Slaves also had different cultural and religious traditions that hindered their incorporation, especially for those from the Muslim north. The most significant distinctions were political, anyway. People were identified as citizens of Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ibadan, Ilorin, or Dahomey and not as Yoruba or Fon, the two major linguistic and cultural divisions.

Dahomey, the notorious slave-raiding and slave-trading state where regiments of female soldiers captured the imagination of abolitionists in Europe, was particularly prosperous in the nineteenth century, and this prosperity rested on slavery, as the critics of the slave trade charged. Not only were many slaves deported, even after mid-century, but slaves were successfully employed in the domestic economy to produce palm oil and other goods for local exchange and export. The king did indeed have thousands of women in his army and harem, and these women also traded on his behalf. Nonetheless, the most important development in the nineteenth century was the king's investment in plantation slavery.

By the time the palm-oil trade became important in the 1840s, there were many plantations around the port towns of Ouidah and Porto Novo and near the Dahomey capital of Abomey.²⁵ The owners of these plantations included the king, local merchants and officials, and Brazilian traders. One Dahomey businessman, Kwenun, the son of a local merchant, owned thousands of slaves by the 1860s, while the king confiscated some palm groves, establishing plantations in the area between his capital and the coast. Freed slaves, returning from Sierra Leone and Brazil, bought slaves for their farms on the coast, too. Some of these were Muslims whose origins were much farther north, and a few became quite wealthy. Domingo Martinez, a Brazilian, had plantations near Porto Novo.

F. E. Forbes visited Abomey in 1851 and learned that slaves constituted a third of the population, an estimated 10,000 out of the capital's 30,000 inhabitants. He also found slave plantations on the outskirts of the capital:



MAP 5. Major Concentrations of Slaves in Nineteenth-Century West Africa.

Near Abomey is a royal plantation of palms, corn etc., called Leffle-foo. It is inhabited by people from the province of Anagoo, prisoners of war, and is under the direction of a Dahomean caboceer [official]. The gifts of nature are all bountifully bestowed, and the soil rich and capable of producing every vegetable production.²⁶

Forbes learned that wealthy merchants had thousands of slaves, including one trader at Ouidah, whose “very extensive palm-oil plantations ... [required] very little labour in procuring this valuable and lucrative article of trade. On the estate are many establishments, slave villages, for the manufacture, which is very simple.”²⁷ Forbes underestimated the labor needed to prepare palm oil for export. The oil had to be extracted and then transported to the coast; both activities were labor intensive, but his observations on the scale of slavery reveals the extent to which Dahomey now relied on slave labor.

A similar pattern of extensive investment in slave-based trade and agriculture characterized the economies of the various Yoruba states.²⁸ These small states, based on well-fortified cities of considerable size, used slaves as the basis of their armies, usually organized as private militia units belonging to individual warlords, but slaves also occupied extensive plantations outside the walls of the cities. One warlord, Kurumi, can serve as an example. This man marched his private army into the town of Ijaye in 1829 and seized the government. By 1859, Kurumi had 300 wives and a slave army 1,000 strong. One slave subordinate – who was servile in origin but no longer in status – had 300 slaves of his own. Kurumi also owned farmland, and he had many other slaves for agricultural work. Yoruba warlords like Kurumi were found at Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Ogbomoso, Ife, and Ketu.²⁹

Ibadan had one of the largest slave societies in the interior of the Bight of Benin. The city was founded as a war camp in 1829 and subsequently rose to prominence as a place of refuge for many people forced to evacuate their homes during the Yoruba wars that followed the disintegration of Oyo. Until the 1840s, the Ibadan warlords exported many of the slaves they captured, and they continued to sell some even as the trans-Atlantic trade entered its final decline. By the 1850s, however, most large slave owners were organizing their slaves for agricultural production. Samuel Johnson, the renowned Yoruba historian who wrote about the history of his people in the late nineteenth century, recorded that the influx of slaves into Ibadan was often several thousand per year. The able-bodied male slaves were trained as soldiers; the old and infirm were sold for whatever price they could fetch; pretty female slaves were placed in harems or married. “All the rest are sent into the farms, each to be employed in his or her own line. The chiefs had large farms and farm houses containing a hundred to over a thousand souls. These extensive plantations not only support their huge establishments but also supply the markets.”³⁰ As palm oil became a major export to Europe, slaves were needed to produce the oil and carry it to the coast. Slaves were also used to grow okra, beans, maize, yams, and vegetables, which were marketed locally and also distributed to other Yoruba towns. Ibadan became militarily the strongest and demographically

the largest of these towns, and consequently its agricultural output was important throughout the region.

By the 1860s and 1870s, there were 104 families at Ibadan who together owned an estimated 50,000 slaves, an average of 500 per family. These slave owners included all the political leaders, among them the Basorun, the military ruler of the city, as well as the various warlords.³¹ Slave holdings included private armies, plantation workers, craftsmen, livestock herders, and porters. Oluyole, the Basorun from 1837 to 1847, for example, had thousands of slaves, most of whom were Hausa and Muslim. Many of these were soldiers, but his land holdings were extensive, including separate plantations for yams, okra, beans, maize, and vegetables. Ogunmola, a warlord during the 1850s and early 1860s, had 1,800 slave soldiers alone, not including his plantation hands. Madam Efusetan, among women with extensive slave holdings, had some 2,000 slaves on her plantations in the 1870s, and she owned more in her Ibadan home. These examples could be repeated for Ondo, Ijebu, and Abeokuta.³²

Most of the slaves in Yorubaland were employed in the military, on plantations, as porters, and in harems. Thousands of slave soldiers were assembled on a permanent war footing. There were many wars, numerous skirmishes, and regular raiding into the territory of enemies. Neither Ibadan nor other strongholds gained supremacy in these struggles. Military slavery, therefore, was one response to political insecurity, but private armies made little if any contribution to the productive activities of their master's household; indeed, they lived off the labor of other slaves. They could be used as porters, but they were not usually involved in farm work. Slave soldiers were given part of the spoils, and they could advance in military rank if they proved themselves in battle. They were fed by the warlord from the output of plantation slaves and often were given wives.

Plantation slaves worked under overseers, in separate villages outside the cities, where they risked capture in raids. Labor requirements included the construction of yam mounds – following the experiments of Basorun Oluyole, who wanted to grow yams that were large enough to constitute a single load, for example, upward of 40 kg each. He achieved this by building large compost heaps of weeds, banana and plantain stalks, and earth. Yam seedlings were planted on the top, so that the roots would grow into the soil and fill the compost mound. The experiments proved successful, and this became the method of yam cultivation among all the large slave owners.³³ The technique required extensive labor, of course, and careful management. Slaves worked from sunrise until early afternoon, and then were free to work their own plots, where they grew subsistence crops. Planters also owned groves of kola, palm, and other trees, although there were few economies of scale in sylvan production. Many small producers also competed, particularly in the palm-oil trade. Besides the large slave owners, there were other farmers who owned fewer slaves, still sometimes as many as twenty or thirty.

Concubinage also required thousands of slaves, and these were more likely to be incorporated into a kinship group. Marriage to a slave woman changed her status, so that she was no longer liable for sale. Virtually all influential men – prosperous farmers and warlords – had more than one wife; some had hundreds.³⁴ This demonstrates an extremely uneven distribution of women in society. Many slave soldiers and plantation slaves had no wives or married relatively late in life. Nonetheless, the incorporation of slave women through marriage and the granting of free status to their children demonstrate two features of Yoruba society in the nineteenth century. First, the status of women was low, and access to women through enslavement undermined marriage customs. Secondly, this treatment of slave women reflected an assimilation tendency. Control over the reproductive capacities of women remained as important as it had been when slavery was marginal to the functioning of kinship. Even the introduction of Christianity and Islam did not alter this practice. The Christians included repatriated individuals from Sierra Leone and the Americas who had been freed from slavery and resettled at Abeokuta and elsewhere. Many of these Christians acquired slaves and had more than one wife themselves. Muslims could have four wives, and as many concubines as they could afford.

On the one hand, there was a tendency toward assimilation, practiced more in some places than in others. On the other hand, plantations and large military establishments were a countervailing force in which slavery was far different in practice than the ideal of the assimilated slave. Samuel Crowther, an ex-slave from the Yoruba country who later became an Anglican bishop of the lower Niger River, reported that the nature of domestic slavery, as opposed to plantation slavery, was relatively benign in 1857. The main feature, true to the perception of slavery in those holdings that were small, was that slaves were treated as if they were members of the family. “The slaves and masters in this country live together as a family; they eat out of the same bowl, use the same dress in common and in many instances are intimate companions, so much so that, entering a family circle, a slave can scarcely be distinguished from a free man unless one is told.”³⁵ In 1881, the Lagos merchant and slave owner, Braimah Apatira, provided a similar view of his relationship with his slave assistants:

The boys [trader slaves] live with their masters in the house, receiving food, clothing, and being treated as one of the family. But no wages are paid. If they need money they are dashed [given] some. If they conduct themselves well the master gets them wives and gives them money to start for themselves. The boys work for their masters and go to market for them. If they don’t behave they are sent away with nothing.³⁶

Both Crowther’s and Apatira’s comments describe how slavery was supposed to function, as seen by proslavery apologists. In commercial establishments such as Apatira’s, some slaves may well have been treated as if they were family members, but where slave holdings were substantial, it simply was not possible to do so.

The Bight of Biafra

Slavery was almost as common in the Biafra interior as elsewhere on the West African coast. The concentration of slaves varied, with the highest ratios of slaves to free men near commercial centers, in the Niger delta, and along the northern frontier of Igboland. Slave-to-free ratios were lower in the densely populated central areas of the region, and here individual slave holdings tended to be small too.³⁷ The region became the largest exporter of palm products, but unlike Dahomey and the Yoruba states, the palm trees remained primarily in the hands of small producers, particularly in the lineage-based villages of the densely populated central Igbo country and among the similar communities of Ibibio inland from the Cross River.

In this situation – when slave departures declined to insignificance in the 1830s and palm-oil exports were already substantial – there was no serious economic recession.³⁸ As elsewhere, the availability of slaves who earlier would have been sold to the Americas made it possible for slave owners to redirect their labor into the domestic economy. The largest slaveholders among the Aro, the Efik of Old Calabar, the Igbo of Aboh, and the Ijaw of the Niger delta continued to concentrate on commerce. They invested in slaves because they were needed as porters and canoe men, and slaves were also used in agriculture near Old Calabar, Aboh, and the Aro settlements, where significant pockets of plantation development emerged. Nonetheless, the bulk of the export crop was not produced on plantations but on family and lineage farms, and the oil was often carried to bulking points by free people – usually women – as well. Central Igboland and the Ibibio country were densely covered with palm trees, and farmers could increase production merely by protecting young trees and allowing them to mature.³⁹ Slave labor was used in this expansion, but on a small scale and in small holdings. Slaves were indeed useful in agricultural tasks, either in processing palm oil, carrying it to market, or tilling the land for yams and other crops, for all these activities were limited by the labor available. Those peasants who could afford to supplement the labor of their wives and children could increase output only if they had access to slaves or pawns.

In the Ngwa region of the palm belt, adult males harvested the palm produce on the trees near their compounds, while their wives cracked the nuts and extracted the oil. On certain days, lineage members also could harvest produce on the communal land of the clan or village. This land, administered by the heads of the lineages (*okpara-ukwu*) or the villages (*eze-ala*), contained large numbers of palm trees, so that the fruit gathered there was an important supplement to the palm supplies of the small producers. Once the oil was extracted, the women – sometimes accompanied by a few males if the distance to market was great – carried the oil, and, late in the century, kernels too, to the riverside depots; for Ngwaland, the principal markets were at Akwete, Ohambele, and Azumiri. Merchants in these towns bought the oil and kernels and then resold them to merchants from Bonny and, after 1869, from Opobo

too. The women kept the proceeds from kernel sales; the receipts from oil went to their men.⁴⁰

The lineages and village heads were also major producers of oil and kernels, primarily because they controlled the ancestral lands and because they had more wives and dependents – including slaves – who could increase the scale of production. These lineage and village heads also received additional labor from the community as a form of tribute on each *orie* day of the four-day Igbo week. Such men as Egege Nwannenta, Nwagalasi Oguikpe, and Oluje Egbulefu became major producers at the end of the nineteenth century; profits from palm-produced sales strengthened the position of the lineage heads within Ngwa society. Similarly, the heads of Akwete, Ohambele, and Azumiri – the three major produce markets – were also large producers; their wives received credit from the Bonny and Opobo merchants, which enabled them to become influential intermediaries in the purchase of oil and kernels from small producers. These women journeyed to such Ngwa towns as Obegu, Aba, and Abala, where oil and kernels were plentiful, to buy direct from producers. At Obegu, Chief Ananaba dominated production and marketing; his share of the oil sold at Akwete has been estimated at one-quarter of the volume shipped from Akwete to Bonny.⁴¹

Throughout the Biafra region, wealthy men (and some women) consolidated their position in society through the control of lineage land, trade, and the acquisition of slaves and pawns. Isichei has characterized these “persons of property” (*ogaranya*) as a class, distinguished by the size of polygamous families and the number of slaves and clients. In Item, for example, “a man’s wealth depended on the number of slaves.” There were three important slave owners in Item, each with an estimated 400 slaves. All three were local doctors who made and sold war charms. Some slave dealers at Arondizuogu had twenty to forty wives and many slaves, and they too were part of the *ogaranya* class.⁴² The Ngwa lineage and village heads were members of the *okonko* secret society, and membership in this and comparable societies seems to have been one of the criteria of the *ogaranya*. These societies – *okonko* among the Ngwa and Aro; *ekpe* at Old Calabar; the *ozo* titled societies at Asaba and elsewhere – promoted the interests of the elite.⁴³ The *okonko* society, for example, was a masked society, which terrorized offenders, burned their houses, and sold people into slavery if there was a decision to enforce justice as defined by the society. Hence one of its functions was to guarantee credit and provide commercial links with other parts of the region, particularly with the Aro.

The heaviest concentration of slaves was at the commercial centers, including Aboh, Asaba, Onitsha, Ossomari, Ndoki, Akwete, Uzuakoli, Aro Chukwu, and the towns of the Niger delta (Brass, Akassa, Elem Kalabari, Bonny, and Opobo). The slave population of Ossomari, numbered in the thousands, is an example.⁴⁴ A report of 1902 estimated the population of the town at 6,000 to 8,000, many of whom were slaves, and the outlying districts had thousands of slaves, perhaps as many as 14,000. At Asaba, where slaves were also numerous,

farms extended for thousands of hectares on the west side of the Niger, and although the number of slaves there is unknown, it is likely that much of this land was worked by slave labor.⁴⁵ The Aro communities, not surprisingly, also had many slaves, since the Aro were the major slave traders in the region. In the Afikpo area, for example, where the Aro formed almost 10 percent of the population, they owned the most slaves. By 1900, one wealthy Aro merchant at Aro Chukwu, Okoroji, owned 1,000 slaves, according to local tradition. These were settled on three plantations, two of which were 15 km from town.

Yellow Duke of Old Calabar owned an estimated 3,000 slaves in the early 1880s, most of them settled on plantations where the slaves worked under overseers. Slaves farmed the fields of their master and carried palm oil into Old Calabar. Yellow Duke and other planters visited these plantations occasionally. The fact that Yellow Duke was formerly a slave demonstrates that there was a significant difference in status and opportunity between those slaves brought into the merchant firms of the town and those confined to plantations.⁴⁶ After 1869, some Bonny merchants followed the Old Calabar lead in diversifying the activities of their slaves; plantations were established adjacent to the creeks inland where palm produce and food could be raised. Because the Bonny merchants concentrated on trade rather than production, it is unlikely that even a modest investment in agriculture would have been possible without slaves.⁴⁷

The incidence of slavery also increased on the northern frontier of Igboland. The more extensive cultivation of palm trees in the densely populated areas of the Biafra interior undermined the production of food crops. The palm belt eventually needed to import foodstuffs from other areas, particularly the region farther inland where slaves were employed in growing yams on plantations. Around Nike, for example, slaves sometimes lived in their own farm settlements.⁴⁸ Although some slaves in the central Nike villages lived with their masters, they did the farming, for free men here did not engage in agricultural labor. Nor did free men marry slaves.

This use of slaves in agriculture was important in the shift to "legitimate" trade. Slaves were seldom settled on distinct palm plantations, but they were settled in their own villages sometimes or in separate parts of their masters' compounds. No matter the arrangement, they grew yams for sale to the palm belt. All along the northern frontier of Igbo country, where land was readily available, adventuresome men secured tracts of land and acquired slaves. It was necessary to conquer some of this land or protect it from invasion from the north, so that people relied on kinship to maintain militia units. Slaves were barred from the military, however; their task was to farm, sometimes in separate settlements that were more vulnerable to enemy raids. They could respond in self-defense, but their principal military function was to warn their master and his lineage of an impending attack. Some of these northern centers, such as Nike, were allied to the Aro, supplying the Aro with slaves, yams, and other goods in exchange for firearms and manufactures.

An examination of the commercial organization of the Niger-delta trading house is essential to understand how slavery functioned in this setting.⁴⁹ Some firms had hundreds of slaves, and because they were organized on a paramilitary basis, the opportunities for advancement in the firm could be great. Occasionally, enterprising young men became wealthy and influential enough to recruit a crew for their own riverboat. These new subsidiaries continued under the central direction of the parent firm, but they traded largely on their own account. A man, slave or free, had to have sufficient capital or credit – usually a combination of the two – to outfit a boat and buy trade goods. He needed permission to operate in the markets of the parent firm, and this was either readily given because it promoted the interests of the house in general or it was decided to expand operations into new areas in the hopes of eliminating a rival or acquiring new sources of palm oil. In either case, the new enterprise needed a crew, often fifty or more men, and these were invariably slaves that the investor owned himself or in combination with several other investors. It is clear from this example that individuals could become extremely wealthy and powerful, unless they were eliminated in the fierce competition of the trade. Slaves successfully rose to the highest positions in the trading firms of the Niger delta towns, particularly at Bonny and Elem Kalabari, and also at Brass. One slave, purchased in his youth at an inland market, even rose to head the most successful commercial establishment at Bonny, and when he was forced into a difficult political position there he moved his following to a new site at Opobo and became that town's ruler. This man, Jaja, accomplished in a single lifetime a transformation in status from humble Igbo slave boy to powerful ruler, owning more than a thousand slaves, including slave subordinates who had large holdings themselves.

Slavery in the Niger delta and at other commercial centers in the region, including Old Calabar, Aboh, and Duala, had more similarities to the military slavery of the Yoruba towns and Muslim countries than to domestic slavery or plantation slavery. Crowther observed that at all the commercial centers along the Niger, from the delta towns northward toward the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers, slave holdings were often quite large:

Accumulation of slaves at Abo, Idda, and Gbegbe, to show how wealthy they are – because a man's worth is estimated by the number of his wives and slaves – is the prevailing ambition of the people. Olumene [of Idah] is said to hold about 200 slaves, with whom he lives in a separate group of huts at Idda. Akaia and his brother, who have inherited their father's property, are said to own about 400.⁵⁰

At Aboh in the 1850s, where many firms owned large numbers of slaves, some of whom traded on the account of their master, Crowther learned that trusted slaves had become wealthy on their own. "Some of the old slaves have themselves become owners of a large property and many slaves; and thus become, in a great measure, independent of their masters, except waiting on them occasionally."⁵¹ That slaves could in fact acquire their own slaves demonstrates

that slave status could change. The designation "slave" could be little more than a sign of origin and association with the commercial firm of the slave's original master. Once slaves had assumed independence and an effective social freedom that placed them in the class of slave owners, emancipation had realistically taken place. Here was a system that promoted slaves as a means of securing strict loyalty and dependence.

Slaves were also sacrificed to religious deities at funerals and on other occasions; these practices too promoted social control. At Uburu, for example, a slave was usually killed in deference to the supernatural protector of the salt lake and marked the opening of the salt season, whereas in the Niger delta, a slave could be offered to such river spirits as Duminea.⁵² The taking of titles, especially *ozo* titles, required the death of slaves too. The 400 titleholders at Asaba in 1881, for example, had each sacrificed a slave on assuming his title; two more slaves were killed at the funerals of these men.⁵³ At Old Calabar, the number of funeral victims was much larger; hundreds of slaves were killed at several important funerals in the nineteenth century. In most places, however, one or two deaths were usually sufficient. The cheapening of human life symbolized in these practices was perhaps most gruesomely displayed at the house of skulls in Bonny and the shrine of Ibinukpabi at Aro Chukwu, which was lined with the heads of slaves.⁵⁴

Slaves hoped that successful apprenticeship in trade could lead to full assimilation and social mobility. Kinship terminology and structures were modified to allow for exactly that possibility. Newly purchased slaves, who were most grateful that they were not destined for an early grave or sale across the Atlantic, learned their lessons quickly. They called their mistress "mother." They accepted a legal status that was likened to that of children, and they learned Ijaw, the Efik dialect, or Aboh Igbo because these languages were used to maintain a corporate distinctiveness that was useful in business and easily revealed the extent of assimilation. Strict discipline was required of these slaves. They learned the skill of the river trade and sudden military confrontation with rivals, where there could be no tolerance of insubordination. Those who would not conform suffered the consequences of sale or death, and such failures must have been far more numerous than the examples of slaves who rose to positions of power and influence. Nonetheless, both extremes were possible, and it did not take long for newly purchased slaves to realize this.

The possibilities of social mobility represented one extreme in the practice of slavery in the delta. People used the terminology of kinship, but this was not a situation in which slaves were incorporated into kinship groups as they were where small domestic units prevailed. Slaves were far too numerous. They comprised the bulk of the population and could aspire to any position in society except for certain titles. And Jaja even challenged the restriction on royal succession by staging a *coup d'état* at Bonny and then withdrawing his supporters to Opobo in 1869.⁵⁵ Real relationships based on marriage between free people and genetic ties between generations were not the most important social

bonds in Bonny society. Rank could be acquired, and slavery was not always an obstacle to improving status.

Elsewhere, such fluid social conditions did not exist. At Old Calabar, which shared many of the same features of commercial organization, slaves were barred from attaining the highest positions in firms.⁵⁶ Calabar traders also used riverboats to reach markets along the Cross River, but the descendants of free merchants prevented almost all slaves from acquiring positions of authority within *ekpe* – the secret society that established and enforced the laws necessary for commerce, including the protection of creditors. By denying access to slaves, *ekpe* guaranteed that those of slave status would not achieve the kind of mobility found at Bonny. Furthermore, Old Calabar merchants settled those slaves that they could not sell or use in their commercial firms on plantations outside the town. These slaves grew foodstuffs for the firms, and until the middle of the century they had the dubious honor of serving as funeral victims as well.

Hope Waddell, a missionary at Calabar in the 1850s, contrasted the two kinds of slavery, domestic and plantation, that were most common in the commercial centers:

Most of the slaves are employed in farming and trading. The former cultivate a portion of land, allotted by their masters for their own use, and generally supply the town markets with produce. Their labour is much less continuous and severe than that of West Indian slaves. If called into towns to work, they receive a small allowance. Those employed in canoes are fed, and are in crews of six to ten to each canoe, under a captain or supercargo. He has a commission on his trade and may trade on his own account a little, but not in palm oil, or so as to neglect his master's interests. The canoe people traffic in provisions, buying with English goods up country, and selling to the townspeople, ships, and mission houses.⁵⁷

Until the 1850s, plantation slaves were also subject to seizure for sacrifice at funerals, which may well have been a poor consolation for the less strenuous labor conditions that they enjoyed over their Jamaican cousins. The amount of labor required on the plantations here and elsewhere in the Biafra interior did not render plantation conditions particularly enjoyable. Usually slaves worked for their master three out of every four days, with the other day reserved for their own fields and for market trading. These slaves had the possibility of a more autonomous life from their master than plantation slaves in the Americas. At Old Calabar, slaves formed an association, tied by blood pacts, which struggled to end the sacrifice of slaves at funerals. Through a series of demonstrations and riots, they successfully challenged the right of their masters to take the lives of slaves, thereby forcing a redefinition of the status of slave. This struggle, nonetheless, hardly amounted to a fight for emancipation, nor did it seriously challenge the institution of slavery.⁵⁸ It ameliorated the conditions of slaves, but it left the institution, with its division between plantation slaves on the one hand and the domestic slaves of the trading firms on the other, firmly intact.

In the central areas of Igbo country, where slave holdings were small, the treatment of slaves also varied. In some places, slaves were readily incorporated into lineages.⁵⁹ Free men took slave wives, and the children were treated as full members of the father's lineage. Slaves could also acquire land from the lineage and start their own homestead, sometimes with the requirement that social deference be shown to the truly free members of the lineage and sometimes with the expectation that first fruits be forwarded to the lineage head. But slaves in some places, even when holdings were small, were not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies, and some villages discouraged or prohibited marriage between slaves and free. The general picture for domestic slavery, therefore, must emphasize the variations in practice. The tendency was toward cultural assimilation for non-Igbo or outsiders from distant parts of the country. They could expect to learn the local dialect, honor the taboos and shrines of the community, and look to the lineage for access to land. They were usually the ones to handle the heaviest agricultural work, particularly the construction of yam mounds. They also carried water. It was possible, nonetheless, for many of these people to blend into the community, and if they could not accomplish full integration, their children or grandchildren often did.

Domestic slaves were the first to suffer when the family or village faced difficult times. If a sacrifice was needed for a shrine, a slave would be bought for the purpose, but if poverty prevented this, a domestic slave would have to be used. Slaves were held as hostages, too, and even after many years they were not allowed to join the community fully. Debt, too, could result in the transfer of a domestic slave, even one born into the community. Similarly, the loss of a legal case, a dispute with a neighboring village, or cases of sorcery or alleged crime could all lead to the removal of one or more slaves from a village. For a lineage, therefore, slaves were an investment and a source of insurance. A lineage could encourage integration, but only up to a point.

One peculiar feature of slavery in the central Igbo provinces – where plantations were rare, population was dense, and palm-oil production greatest – was the existence of cult slaves (*osu*).⁶⁰ These *osu* belonged to a deity and were placed under the direction of a shrine priest. They were often pledged to a shrine during a time when individuals were experiencing personal difficulties, but sometimes families disposed of unwanted children by offering them to the deity. In other cases, family members who knew that they were about to be pawned or sold outright sought sanctuary at the shrine and in return became *osu*. The *osu* themselves performed religious duties. They acted as mediators in disputes and occasionally enforced decisions that were blessed by the shrine priest. The shrines were part of a religious system that included the powerful oracle at Aro Chukwu. Indeed, the practice of attaching *osu* to shrines is sometimes attributed to the example of the Aro Chukwu oracle, and shrine priests and the Aro often shared similar interests and supported each others' actions. The *osu*, because they belonged to the deity, really constituted a caste. Although they were despised, they were also feared. In the absence of the

central authority of a state in the Igbo country, they can be thought of as having functions that were comparable to government slaves in other situations.

The peculiar characteristics of *osu* demonstrate that slavery retained many local features along the West African coast during the nineteenth century. The continuation of earlier practices both in the Biafra interior and elsewhere reveals the strength of tradition in the face of economic and social change. Once slavery had existed on the fringes of the social formation, but now it had become a central institution. Older practices might persist, but the dynamic feature of slavery during the nineteenth century was the more intensive use of slaves in production. Even though slavery remained marginal in many places, and slaves supplemented peasant production in many other locations, the dominant trend was toward a transformation of the economy by relying on slave labor. In this sense, there emerged a mode of production based on slavery. The stages in the transition to a slave mode of production had included the transformation of slavery from a type of dependency in societies based on kinship into a means of supplying the export slave trade. The consolidation of institutions of enslavement and commerce in turn promoted the interests of commercial and political elites that owned large numbers of slaves. These slaves were then available for productive purposes, and this economic exploitation was promoted through the collapse of the market for slaves to be sent to the Americas and the simultaneous rise in market demand for locally produced commodities. In the space of four centuries, West African society had been transformed, and slavery and the slave trade were central to the process.

The transition in the social formation involved two internal transformations. First, between 1800 and 1850, the slave mode of production still included the export sector for slaves; trade and enslavement were integrated with this trans-Atlantic market, and slave-based production was largely a by-product of this external orientation. Pockets of slave-based production were clustered in areas most fully associated with the export trade. In the second half of the century, after the decline and collapse of slave departures, slaves were used more extensively in the domestic economy. Slaves were now destined to supply internal demand, with the output of slave labor directed at both production for export and domestic use. In terms of the consolidation of European capitalism, this transition in the social formation involved a major structural adjustment that strengthened the slave mode of production along the West African coast, thereby clearly separating the African economy from the capitalist world system by maintaining slavery as a barrier. By the end of the nineteenth century, slavery was the basis of political economy in Africa, whereas it no longer mattered in the European-controlled world.

Slavery in the Savanna during the Era of the *Jihads*

The nineteenth century was a period of violent upheaval in the northern savanna and Ethiopia. From Senegambia in the west to the Red Sea in the east, the series of holy wars (*jihads*) that began in 1804 transformed most of this region, and slavery played a vital role in the transformation. The increased importance of slavery is evident in the export figures for slaves – 1,650,000 slaves sold north across the Sahara Desert and the Red Sea – but the *jihads* resulted in the enslavement of millions of other people who were settled within the new states. This led to a more intensive use of slaves in production, which further consolidated a political economy in which slavery was crucial and in that sense constituted a slave mode of production.

Increased slave use was related to two factors. First, some areas benefited from the export trade, which included not only slaves but steadily growing quantities of “legitimate” commodities. This expanding market for other merchandise, especially ostrich feathers, ivory, tanned skins, and gum arabic, was connected with the general economic growth of Europe in the nineteenth century. These commodities were taken across the Sahara, although gum arabic and peanuts were shipped from the Senegambia coast, and ivory and shea butter were exported via the Niger-Benue confluence. The second and most important factor was the expansion of the regional economies that were centered in the northern savanna itself. For the first time in centuries, there was no serious multiyear drought that undermined the economy, although drought still affected developments locally. Production in foodstuffs, livestock, textiles, and other manufactures expanded, especially in the new Islamic theocracies. A corresponding expansion occurred in commerce, with the result that the southern desert, the savanna, and the northern forest-zone were closely integrated, probably more so than ever before.¹

The Size of the Slave Population in the Savanna

By the end of the nineteenth century, 30 to 50 percent of the total population of the western Sudan was slave, and in some locations the percentage was higher, reaching 80 percent near some commercial centers (Table 9.1). These estimates are based on French efforts to assess the importance of slavery in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century.² The estimate for 1904 accounts for at least 382,800 slaves. There is no way of judging the extent to which the incidence of slavery had increased in the course of the nineteenth century, and it may well be that the proportion of slaves in the population at the end of the century was greater than 50 percent overall. Slave masters had many reasons to falsify information given to French census takers, and the censuses themselves were subject to tremendous error. Nonetheless, these data are essential to the reconstruction of the history of slavery. The scale of slavery alone was so great that the productive employment of slaves was the most important aspect of the institution during the century.

In the central Sudan, the incidence of slavery was on the same order as in the western Sudan, although there are no census data comparable to the French records. The largest and most populous state in the central Sudan – the Sokoto Caliphate – had a substantial slave population – a conclusion reached from widely scattered information.³ In the capital districts of Sokoto and Gwandu, the overwhelming majority of inhabitants were slaves, whereas in the populous emirates of Kano and Zaria, perhaps 50 percent of the population was slave, at least by the end of the century. A similar pattern prevailed elsewhere; slaves came to form a considerable part of the population of Nupe and Adamawa after mid-century – they comprised the majority of people near the capitals of these emirates. Even smaller emirates, including Liptako in the far west and Hadejia on the border with Borno in the east, had large numbers of slaves. Throughout the Sokoto Caliphate, the slave population tended to be concentrated near the major towns and along trade routes, and as these developed in the course of the century, the slave population expanded too.

Concentrations of slaves were also found in the Nilotic Sudan and parts of the Ethiopian highlands. Again, the nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented growth in slavery. In the Nilotic Sudan, slaves – already numerous around Sennar – became common along the river north of the Nile confluence. In the southern slaving grounds, local societies were totally restructured as slave armies and slave settlements spread south and southwest. Eventually this trend affected the Zande country and other parts of the northern Congo River basin, and events traceable to the Nilotic Sudan reverberated as far west as Borno, which fell to the army of Rabeh Fadlallah, a Jellaba by origin, in 1891. In Ethiopia too, slavery became more prevalent, especially in the southern Galla towns, which grew with the influx of new slaves. Even in the Christian highlands, slaves were numerous.⁴

TABLE 9.1. *Demographic Profile of Slave Populations in the Western Sudan, 1904*

Administrative district	Men	%	Women	%	Children	%	Total
Bafoulabe	4,825	32.6	6,540	44.1	3,455	23.3	14,820
Bandiagara	2,356	35.6	3,161	47.7	1,108	16.7	6,625
Bougouni	1,700	37.6	1,640	36.2	1,186	26.2	4,526
Buriya	2,000	25.0	2,500	31.3	3,500	43.8	8,000
Dinguiraye	3,114	28.5	4,388	40.2	3,415	31.3	10,917
Dori	15,300		24,565				39,865
Dunzu	3,000	37.5	3,800	47.5	1,200	15.0	8,000
Fernkodogo	2,000	13.3	4,000	26.7	9,000	60.0	15,000
Gao	Women and children are 2/3 of slaves (about 8,000)						12,000
Gumbu	Women and children outnumber men 3:1				(18,000 to 6,000)		24,000
Jenne	3,961	24.8	7,981	49.9	4,039	25.3	15,981
Kade	5,000	38.5	6,000	46.2	2,000	15.4	13,000
Kaedi	10,000	27.8	8,000	22.2	18,000	50.0	36,000
Kolen	1,250	25.0	1,750	35.0	2,000	40.0	5,000
Koutiala	4,050	41.8	4,020	41.4	1,630	16.8	9,700
Kurussa	3,600	32.7	4,200	38.2	3,200	29.1	11,000
Lobi	2,000	25.0	4,000	50.0	2,000	25.0	8,000
Louga	2,696	30.2	3,629	40.6	2,615	29.3	8,940
Maasi	1,200	24.0	1,800	36.0	2,000	40.0	5,000
Medina Kouta	5,389	41.1	5,437	41.5	2,276	17.4	13,102
Medine	125	19.2	400	61.5	125	19.2	650
Raz el Ma	440	28.6	500	32.5	600	39.0	1,540
Satadugu	545	36.3	380	25.3	575	38.3	1,500
Segu	9,172	36.5	8,805	35.0	7,184	28.5	25,161
Siguiro	4,097	34.2	3,480	29.0	4,410	36.8	11,987
Sokolo	6,152	46.1	4,002	30.0	3,198	23.9	13,352
Sumpi	2,036	33.5	2,131	35.0	1,918	31.5	6,085
Tenkodogo	2,000	13.3	4,000	26.7	9,000	60.0	15,000
Timbi-Medina	1,300	17.3	4,000	53.3	2,200	29.3	7,500
Timbi-Tunni	1,500	37.5	1,100	27.5	1,400	35.0	4,000
Tivouane	2,951	25.4	4,236	36.4	4,447	38.2	11,634
Tuba	2,400	30.0	2,720	34.0	2,880	36.0	8,000
Yatenga	2,573	36.7	2,436	34.8	1,994	28.5	7,003
TOTAL	108,700*	30.9	135,600	39.3	102,500	29.8	346,800*

* Excludes Gao and Gumbu.

Source: Martin Klein, "Women in slavery in the western Sudan," in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 186. Totals are rounded to the nearest hundred.

The availability of slaves made possible the more extensive use of slaves in production, especially in agriculture but also in other activities. Slaves lived on plantations or in their own villages near all the major commercial centers. War captives were settled in defensible positions to provide the agricultural and manufacturing foundation for economic development, with the result that the metropolitan districts of the major states imported slaves en masse. Merchants too participated in this expansion; they settled slaves at the towns along the established trade routes of the savanna and used slave labor to open new routes that stretched beyond the borders of the major states. In some cases, the output of slave labor was coordinated to supply armies and palace staffs, whereas in others, harvests were sold on the market or used to feed itinerant merchants.⁵

The expansion of the plantation sector, based on the regeneration of the centuries-old system dating back to the medieval era, began with the reorganization of the political economy in the northern savanna during the early decades of the nineteenth century. This first phase ended roughly at mid-century. During this phase, the relatively densely populated areas of the Senegambia, middle Niger valley, Hausaland, and the northern Nilotic Sudan experienced an increase in the slave population, although there were large areas between these regions where slavery remained marginal and population density low. During the second phase, from 1850 to 1900 (and in some places, lasting even later), new centers of slave concentration were opened, generally to the south of the earlier developments. In these decades, the upper Niger region, the Benue River valley and neighboring parts of the Niger valley, and the southern basin of the Nile were incorporated into this expanded slave-based productive system. A subsidiary expansion also occurred along the desert edge. In some places, it began in the early part of the century, but it experienced dramatic growth in the closing decades of the century, especially in the western Sudan.

The Western Sudan

The legacy of *jihad* was an important factor in the history of the far-western Sudan. The rivalry between Muslim reformers and the old warrior elite had already led to war in the eighteenth century. Futa Jallon and Futa Toro were the successful products of this struggle; but an outbreak along the Gambia in the 1790s failed, as did another revolt in Walo and Kay or in 1830. In the middle Niger region, however, the caliphate of Hamdullahi was established in 1818. An even more important uprising began under al-Hajj 'Umar in 1852 and spread throughout the region from the foothills of Futa Jallon to the middle Niger valley, while another movement under Ma Ba operated in Senegambia after 1861.⁶ In the 1870s, Samori led another movement in the upper Niger basin, so that by the closing decades of the nineteenth century virtually the whole of the western Sudan was in the hands of Muslim reformers. Based on the results of these *jihads*, the western Sudan comprised three subregions: first, the Senegambia and Futa Jallon; second, the area incorporated into Segu

Tukolor as a consequence of the *jihad* of al-Hajj 'Umar; and third, the upper Niger basin that came largely within Samori's sphere of influence.

In 1806, the first ruler of Futa Toro, Abd el-Kader, was deposed. A conservative, landowning aristocracy was determined to reap the rewards of the successful struggle of the 1770s; the expansive phase of *jihad* was terminated, thereby setting the stage for the exploitation of slaves and free peasants who worked the land along the river. Until 1860, most slave holdings appear to have been relatively small; farmers were considered wealthy if they owned a slave or two. Thereafter, the slave market was saturated with fresh imports from the interior, and average holdings increased. In the French census of 1904, slaves accounted for at least 20 percent of the population; there were 38,600 slaves reported, although it is likely that this figure was an undercount. About 35 percent of these slaves had been born in Futa Toro; many other people who were second- and third-generation slaves could easily be disguised from the inquisitive French agents.⁷

Elsewhere in Senegambia, the struggle between the old *tyeddo* class of warriors and the Muslim reformers resulted in the extension of Muslim communities and the increase in the number of slaves. According to British reports in 1894, slaves outnumbered free men two to one among the Malinke communities along the Gambia. The French census of 1904, which came after long interaction between local societies and French colonialism, also showed large numbers of slaves, although the French were only able to account for a portion of the slave population of Senegambia in the census of 1904. Local knowledge of French antislavery sentiments had resulted in extensive concealment of the actual situation. Nonetheless, one-third the population of Sine-Saalum was identified as slave. The Kaymor area of southern Saalum was one area of relatively high slave concentration. The Muslim population there was largely involved in agriculture and used slave labor. An important trade route passed near the coast. Salt from the pans formed by an inlet from the Atlantic was sold south to the Gambia River and then inland; grain and cotton were grown extensively, and textile production fed the same trade route.⁸

The growth of peanut exports after mid-century encouraged the importation of slaves to be used in agriculture, although some of the expansion involved the movement of free, migrant farmers and escaped slaves into the regions too. Peanuts were first exported from the Gambia River in the 1830s; by 1840, the Gambia exported 1,100 tons; the figure rose to 8,500 tons in 1848. By the 1850s, areas to the north also became significant producers; Senegal exported 5,400 tons in 1854, whereas Gambian exports were already 11,000 tons by then. This expansion continued, especially in Senegal, until the 1880s, when the worldwide economic depression resulted in a fall in price and the temporary decline in the volume of the trade. In 1882, Senegal sold more than 80,000 tons, and in 1884, Gambia sold almost 18,000 tons, although this grand-total peak of 98,000 tons was not attained again until the 1890s. By then, the completion of the Saint Louis–Dakar railway (1885) and relief from the cycles in

the global economy encouraged peanut cultivation once again. This last phase of expansion was directly related to the influx of slaves into the area along the railway in Kajoor and western Bawol.⁹

There were few economies of scale in the cultivation of peanuts, so large slave owners had no particular advantage over small producers. Consequently, the growth of the trade encouraged peasant production. Free migrant farmers were traveling to the Gambia from the 1840s on, and they also moved into Kajoor a few decades later when the expansion spread there. In 1851, the British governor of the Gambia estimated that migrants produced one-third of the export crop, and although estimates for the role of peasants in the production of peanuts in other areas are not available, their contribution to total output was significant.¹⁰ The origins of these migrants are not clear; some may have been of slave background, whereas others may have moved west to escape the wars in the interior. Despite the importance of the peasant sector, slave labor was also essential to the expansion of peanut production. The proportion of slaves in the population was high in precisely those areas that were most involved in the export trade: the Gambia River valley, Sine-Saalum, Kajoor, and the Senegal valley.

Whereas peasant production and slave-based agriculture were both common in the Senegambia basin, plantations continued to dominate the economy of Futa Jallon, as they had in the last decades of the eighteenth century. In 1820, René Caillié reported numerous plantations, which he called *ouronde* (*runde*), in the parts of Futa Jallon he visited on his journey into the interior. For example, near Gneretemile was “an ouronde, or slave village, surrounded by good plantations of bananas, cotton, cassavas and yams, [while after] Maraca ... we found ourselves in a sandy plain, containing several small slave villages.” Two days’ journey from the capital of Timbo was the plantation of Popoco, “containing between one hundred and fifty and two hundred slaves, who are employed in agriculture.”¹¹ These slaves grew cassava, yams, peanuts, rice, and millet. He passed many others as well, and spent some time at Cambaya, the village of the caravan leader Ibrahim, with whom he was travelling. He accompanied Ibrahim to his rice plantation:

to see the slaves employed in preparing the ground for sowing. The poor slaves work entirely naked, exposed to the heat of the burning sun. The presence of the master intimidates them, and the fear of punishment expedites the work; but they make themselves amends in his absence. The women, who had very little clothing, had their children tied to their backs. They were employed in collecting dry grass, which, being burnt, forms a kind of manure, indeed, the only kind they use.¹²

These slaves had their own huts, where the older women prepared food for the field hands. Behind these huts were small gardens that belonged to the slaves and from which they were expected to feed themselves. The slaves were allowed two days per week to work in their own gardens. The only major distinction between Ibrahim’s plantation and many others in Futa Jallon was

that he was a private merchant, not associated with the Fulbe aristocracy who owned the vast majority of slaves in the country.

Demographic data collected in Futa Jallon after slavery had been abolished and many slaves had fled provide a sufficiently large sample of plantations to give some idea of the size and number of slave holdings. Of the 34,600 people in the province of Labe in the 1940s, there were 11,300 people who still lived in villages that had once been plantations.¹³ In the language of the colonial period, these inhabitants were no longer called slaves, but “serfs.” These 11,300 “serfs” were settled on 121 “roundes,” or plantations, an average of 93 people per plantation. In the past, the percentage of slaves in the total population had been much higher, perhaps reaching two-thirds. Furthermore, the size of individual plantations had certainly been greater. When these data are put together with earlier accounts, they confirm the existence of a highly developed plantation economy. The plantation slaves, moreover, were not assimilated in the full sense of that term. Otherwise, they would not have been recognizable in distinct communities as late as the 1940s.

The Maraka and Juula towns of the middle Niger valley were also centers of plantation agriculture, with slave populations sometimes as high as 70 to 80 percent of the total population in the immediate vicinity of the towns. Their prosperity depended on the ecologically based trade that stretched from the Sahara Desert to the forests. Salt, livestock, and imports from North Africa came from the north, while kola nuts, gold, and European imports came from the south. Grain and textiles, produced locally by slaves, entered this regional commercial network. Another route westward to the Senegal and Gambia valleys was an alternative avenue to the coast and became particularly important in the nineteenth century as a result of, firstly, the *jihad* of al-Hajj ‘Umar and secondly, the military expansion of the French. These towns served as staging points for caravans to the south and west, and they were the wholesale centers for imports from the north.¹⁴

In the first half of the nineteenth century, before al-Hajj ‘Umar conquered Segu Bambara and transformed this pagan state into the reformed Muslim state of Segu Tukulor, Sinsani was the most important of several Maraka and Juula towns. The integration of its plantation sector and regional trade was typical of the commercial life of the region as a whole. Slave-produced grain was sold to visiting merchants from the sahel, who brought salt from Ijil, while cotton fed the local textile industry. Sinsani was destroyed in 1861, and its trade shifted to the new center at Banamba.¹⁵ Nonetheless, even in its period of decline, the slave population was still substantial. In 1904, the French were able to count 6,436 slaves at Sinsani, which represented 31 percent of the population. Popular tradition remembers the more glorious past, when some slave owners were credited with substantial holdings, as many as 3,000 slaves in some cases.¹⁶ Although these figures cannot be verified, they probably are an accurate indication of the importance of the plantation sector in the period before 1861.

As the successor to Sinsani, Banamba grew rapidly because slaves were imported from the south. In 1864, the town already had 8,000 to 9,000 people and rapidly became the commercial center of Segu Tukolor, just as Sinsani had been the commercial center of Segu Bambara. The wars of Segu Tukolor accounted for many slaves brought into the region in the 1860s and 1870s. In the 1880s, Samori, Tiéba, and Babemba enslaved thousands of people, and these captives were sold north, where many were added to the holdings of the merchants from Banamba and other towns. By the 1890s, plantations surrounded Banamba for a distance of 25–50 km, and the slave population outnumbered the free inhabitants by a ratio of two to one. Although the number of slaves is not known, estimates in 1910 indicate that 20,000 slaves fled from the region of Banamba and Tuba, which may have been half the slave population of the area.¹⁷ Tuba, a town of 3,000, had an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 slaves in its outlying plantations, so that the slave population of Banamba may have been on the order of 30,000 to 35,000. Other towns – at least those that the French officers tried to tabulate – show a similar pattern. Kiba, a town with 2,300 people, had a plantation sector of 5,000 slaves. The district of Segu, which was al-Hajj ‘Umar’s capital, had a population 53 percent slave in 1894, which indicates that there were about 70,000 slaves in the Segu area.¹⁸ Taken together, the slave population of the middle Niger Valley must have been significantly higher than 100,000.

The area to the immediate north, particularly around Gumbu and Sokolo, was not as densely populated, but the ratio of slave to free was about the same. Sokolo had more slaves than free people in 1894;¹⁹ there were at least 13,300 slaves in 1904. Gumbu had about the same proportion of slaves and free. The area as a whole had some 24,000 slaves, whereas in Gumbu itself, 30 families owned 1,700 slaves between them. Some holdings were as large as 100 to 200, but there were many small holdings of 10 slaves or fewer.²⁰ Considering the mass exodus of slaves from this region in the 1890s and first few years of the twentieth century, it is clear that the size of the slave population was still considerable.

In 1818, Sheku Ahmadu and his supporters – many of whom were Fulbe – defeated the Bambara warlords of the interior Niger delta and established an Islamic state, with its capital at Hamdullahi. The state lasted until 1862, when al-Hajj ‘Umar destroyed Hamdullahi and incorporated much of its territory in Masina into Segu Tukolor, although a smaller successor state was founded to the east of Hamdullahi at Bandiagara. Segu Tukolor controlled much of the interior delta as far north as Timbuktu and south to Jenne. The economic development of the state relied on the exploitation of slave labor, based on farming state lands, and the taxation of peasants, who were forced to work in the fields set aside by the government. Slaves had varying obligations, depending on the productivity of their location and the owner. Sometimes masters took a quantity of grain equivalent to a man’s annual subsistence. Occasionally, slaves were expected to pay twice the subsistence amount. Usually slaves worked five

days on the master's land and two days on land set aside for their own use. The output of those slaves who worked for the state went directly into the state treasury; private slaves were taxed indirectly through levies on their masters in lieu of military service and communal taxes. The government was the largest owner of slaves, but merchants still had a substantial number. In the Timbuktu area, particularly in the most northerly part of the delta, slave communities already existed before Ahmadu's *jihad*. Timbuktu slave owners depended on these communities for part of their grain supplies, because Timbuktu itself was not able to support much agricultural production. At Jenne, to the south, there were also many slaves, if the 1904 estimates of slave populations are any indication. In 1904, there were 15,000 to 16,000 slaves in the Jenne area. The prosperity of the Masina heartland ended with its incorporation into Segu Tukulor, and many of the slaves fled or were seized for resettlement elsewhere. The remnants of Hamdullahi at Bandiagara systematically devastated the western delta, thereby reducing the population further.²¹

A spectacular increase in the number of slaves took place further south, precisely in that region where there had been relatively few concentrations of slaves in the early nineteenth century. A number of Juula reformers in Wasulu, Konyan, Toron, Worodugu, and other areas in the upper Niger valley attempted to seize power. This Juula revolution culminated in the creation of a Samorian state in the 1870s and 1880s. In each case, enslavement, slave trading, and the settlement of slaves for productive uses were essential policies of the Juula revolutionaries. Preexisting towns and Muslim communities were generally absorbed into this movement for political consolidation, so that established centers of plantation agriculture expanded too.

Among those existing Muslim towns that survived the Juula revolution was Kankan, located inland from Futa Jallon and associated with the kola trade between the forest and northern savanna. The fertile plain around the town (population: 6,000 in 1820) was the location of slave settlements: "In every direction there are small villages, or ourondes [*runde*], for the slaves. These villages are ornaments to the country, for they are surrounded by fine plantations, where yams, maize, rice, foigne [*fonio*], onions, pistachio-nuts [peanuts], and gombo are grown in abundance."²² The masters generally lived in Kankan, traveling to their plantations to supervise the work. Planters obtained their slaves in Kissi country in the south in exchange for gunpowder, muskets, and textiles. The Kankan planters not only provisioned the caravan traffic in kola and other goods; they also sold some produce to the gold fields of Buré to the north – where slaves worked the gold, as they had for centuries.²³ Caillié was of the opinion that a man "who possesses a dozen slaves may live at his ease without travelling, merely by taking the trouble to superintend them."²⁴ The continued importance of Kankan as a commercial center demonstrates that many slave holders in Kankan did more than merely manage their slaves; as late as 1904, the French still found a large slave population in the region, and in Kankan itself there were 6,000 slaves and 4,500 free men, or 57 percent

slave.²⁵ Unfortunately, there is no estimate of the size of the plantation sector around Kankan, although it must have included tens of thousands of slaves. Kankan was eventually absorbed into the Samorian state.

One of the more successful of the early reformers was Vakaba Toure, who was a craftsman by origin. In 1848, his armed following established the small state of Kabadugu, with its capital at Odienne, in northwestern Ivory Coast. By the time Vakaba died in 1858, slavery had become the central pillar of Kabadugu society. Slaves lived in villages of their own or at temporary camps on the plantations of the aristocracy. Estimates from 1898 indicate that free men inhabited only 8 of the 104 villages in the state; slaves numbered 12,000 in a total population of 19,000. The king alone reportedly owned 4,500 slaves, scattered in 34 villages owned exclusively by the royal family and another 26 villages in which other proprietors also had slaves.²⁶

In the 1860s, the Juula revolution found a strong leader in Samori, whose wars soon engulfed Konyan and Wasulu.²⁷ By 1874, Samori controlled a large area south of Kankan, and by 1879, he dominated the whole of the upper Niger basin. Two years later, Kabadugu and Kankan were incorporated. The Samorian state now bordered Futa Jallon in the west and Segu Tukulor in the north. The Samorian economy relied on the proceeds from the sale of slaves north, which financed the importation of horses and other goods, whereas contacts with the coast enabled the purchase of firearms. Samori's armies enslaved so many people that it was possible to finance this foreign trade and also settle slaves on plantations. The slave populations of Kankan and Kabadugu were supplemented, and new centers of production were established. The most important was near Bissandugu, located south of Kankan, which became Samori's capital.²⁸ Because Samori came into conflict with the French in the 1880s, he was forced to evacuate the Bissandugu region, and consequently the plantation sector was dismantled and it was not possible to reassemble it in its entirety in the lands Samori conquered further east. Nonetheless, it is clear that Samori tried to establish an economic base for his state that relied on slave labor. Political conditions made him rely on enslavement and the sale of slaves to an extent that maintained slave supplies for much of West Africa into the 1890s.

Sikasso and Kong, two rivals of the Samorian state, were also centers of slavery. Sikasso successfully maintained its independence, and, under the dynamic leadership of Tiéba, expanded its slave holdings. When the French examined Sikasso in 1904, they found that two-thirds of the population was slave, which indicates that plantations were as common there as elsewhere.²⁹ Kong was not as fortunate as Sikasso in maintaining its independence; during the eastward exodus, Samori leveled the town, just as al-Hajj 'Umar had had to destroy Sinsani because of local opposition. Nonetheless, the remains of its slave economy were still evident in 1904. There were an estimated 180,000 slaves and 223,000 free men in the Kong region, or 45 percent slaves – for the region as a whole. In areas immediately around Kong and Bandama (the two main centers in the *cercle*), however, the percentage of slaves approached 80 percent.³⁰

In areas between Kong and the middle Niger valley – along the trade route north from Asante to Jenne and Timbuktu – the same pattern of slavery prevailed, although this area was not consolidated into a state during the nineteenth century. At Bobo-Julasso, slaves formed two-thirds of the population;³¹ Wa, Buna, and other towns had large numbers of slaves, too. Information is most complete on Buna, a town that had 10,000 people in 1889. There were about 100 slave settlements (*djoso*) around Buna, all within a radius of 10–30 km from the town. The largest had populations ranging from 200 to 300 people, each under the management of a trusted slave or relative of the owner. The town, divided into different wards for the aristocracy, merchants, and indigenous commoners, had between 3,500 and 4,500 slaves; 2,000 of these slaves belonged to the aristocracy, and the merchants owned most of the others.³² Although the total population of the plantation sector is not known, Holden has been able to estimate that 60 of the plantations in the area had a combined population of 2,700 slaves – an average of 45 per estate.³³ In his sample, plantations ranged in size from 20 to 100 slaves, which are smaller than the estates reported by Boutillier. It may well be that the total slave population in the Buna area approached 10,000. Besides their employment in agriculture, the slaves of Buna were also used in the production of gold.

The Central Sudan

The region between the middle Niger valley and the Lake Chad basin had many similarities with the area farther west. Muslim holy war was again the dynamic political force, in this case the *jihad* led by Usman dan Fodio and his family. There were many towns in the vast territory from Timbuktu in the west to the Cameroon highlands in the east. These towns usually had populations of only a few thousand, but a few were much larger. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the heaviest concentration of these towns was in the Hausa country and included Sokoto, Gwandu, Birnin Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Zaria, and many more – at least several hundred. Elsewhere, towns were more scattered, but an extensive network of trade routes connected them, so that there was a string of towns radiating outward from the center of the Caliphate and from secondary pockets of political and economic concentration elsewhere.

Heinrich Barth, the learned classical scholar and Arabist, spent several years in the Sokoto Caliphate in the early 1850s as an ambassador for the British government. During this time, he learned several local languages, including Hausa, the principal tongue of the caliphate, and acquired a knowledge of local history, economy, and society that was unsurpassed by contemporary European observers of Africa. His observations tended to be conservative, and even his mild antislavery sentiments were subdued in his broader effort to portray African Islamic civilization in a favorable light. Nevertheless, he estimated the percentage of slaves in the population of Kano, the largest and most prosperous province in the Sokoto Caliphate, as at least 50 percent of the entire

population.³⁴ In other parts of the caliphate, similar proportions of slave to free were often found, and, as was the case in Kano, many of these slaves were located on plantations. Thus the Emir of Yola, a provincial capital to the south-east of Kano, had “all his slaves settled in rumde or slave villages, where they cultivate grain for his use or profit.”³⁵ At Ngaundere, a district capital under Yola, population estimates taken during the colonial period still revealed this basic pattern of slave concentration. At Ngaundere itself, there were 6,400 free Fulbe and 6,700 slaves, whereas in the district as a whole, there were 16,450 free Fulbe, 20,000 slaves, and 14,300 independent, free peasants.³⁶ These three cases, Kano, Yola, and Ngaundere, are taken here as examples of the dozens of provinces and districts in the Sokoto Caliphate where high concentrations of slaves were found. The figures from the 1850s and from the twentieth century demonstrate the scale of slavery and the persistence of servile traits that have made possible the reconstruction of the development of this slave society.

Some *jihad* leaders envisioned an economy based on commercial expansion, and commerce depended on agricultural and craft production.³⁷ The aristocracy looked to the merchant class for entrepreneurial skills; therefore, the merchants were protected in their movements. They pushed southeastward into and then beyond the Cameroon highlands; their operations to Asante and the Yoruba states increased in volume. Caliphate textiles and leather goods were exported over a wide area, whereas the importation of salt from the Sahara and neighboring Borno brought areas that were nominally independent under the economic hegemony of the Caliphate. Under the policies of the Caliphate government, Hausa society became associated with the mercantile and craft community, which was identified as free and commoner. Even in those parts of the caliphate away from Hausaland, Hausa settlers dominated these occupations. Hausa commerce had been important before the nineteenth century, but supported by political consolidation, Hausa merchants became more numerous in much of the region bounded by the Benue River valley, the middle and Upper Volta region, and the Lake Chad basin.

Slaves provided much of the labor for the new Fulbe ruling class and the Hausa merchants and craftsmen.³⁸ Aristocrats employed slaves as messengers, retainers, and domestic servants, often in greater numbers than necessary. Male slaves were also drafted into the army, whereas females filled the harems of the wealthiest officials. Because palace establishments were often very large, many women were also needed to prepare and cook food. Merchants relied on slave agents, stock boys, and common laborers. Long and arduous caravan journeys required lots of work. At each caravan stop, animals had to be unloaded, fed, and watered; meals had to be cooked; and camp had to be prepared for the night. Slaves did these jobs in most cases. In town, merchants needed agents to sit in the market or hawk goods in the street and countryside, and water, firewood, and fodder had to be carried. Although slaves also performed menial tasks for other craftsmen, slavery was particularly important in textile production. As in the western Sudan, female slaves carded and spun cotton while male slaves

wove. Slaves either worked for their masters or on their own account, often paying a weekly fee to their masters instead. Hence the craftsmen – including tailors, dyers, and cloth beaters – owned relatively few slaves. But many slaves were employed in textile production. There were approximately 50,000 dyers occupied at some 15,000 dye pits in the Kano area alone at the end of the nineteenth century, and a large proportion of the slave population had to be engaged in spinning and weaving to supply this industry.³⁹

Despite the use of slaves in aristocratic households, merchant firms, and craft production, the most important contribution of slaves was in agriculture. Millet, sorghum, indigo, and cotton were the main crops grown on lands watered by the annual rains; onions, tobacco, indigo, and vegetables were cultivated on irrigated plots during the dry season. As was the case in the western Sudan, plantations were common, although wealthy farmers owned slaves in small numbers too. Polly Hill is probably correct in stating that most slave owners in the central parts of the caliphate were small holders.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, most agricultural slaves were on the large estates of the aristocracy and merchant class.

The growth of the plantation sector occurred in two stages that corresponded with similar developments further west. In the first half of the century, most plantation development occurred in the northern parts of the savanna – near the core cities of Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Gwandu, and Zaria. This phase corresponded to the growth of plantations near the established commercial centers of the western Sudan, which were located along the middle Niger valley, in Futa Jallon, and in the Senegambia region. In the second half of the century, the areas of plantation development spread to the Benue River valley (Yola) and neighboring areas near the confluence of the Niger and Benue (Nupe and Ilorin), although new plantations continued to be established in the core area, which gradually expanded outward, during this second phase too. This consolidation of a plantation sector in the southern parts of the savanna was similar to the expansion of the plantation system into the areas established by Samori and also Odienné and Kabadugu. Some emirates were exceptions to this general southern extension of plantations. Bauchi (southeast of Kano) developed earlier than Yola and effectively became associated with metropolitan Hausaland, whereas Liptako (west of the Niger) was in the northern part of the savanna but as a frontier region developed after the core emirates.⁴¹

Sokoto and Gwandu, together with Wurno, Jega, and other towns, were established in the river valleys of western Hausaland in the heartlands of the old states of Kebbi and Gobir. The intensity of the fighting in this area resulted in the displacement of virtually the whole population. Many people were enslaved; many more slaves were accepted as tribute from other emirates in the caliphate. By the end of the nineteenth century, these valleys were densely inhabited, and slaves comprised the great majority of the population. In neighboring Zamfara, the slave population was less because the indigenous inhabitants stayed. Nonetheless, around Talata Mafara, Kaura Namoda, and other

towns, plantations were also common. With its relatively high proportion of peasants, Zamfara remained the exception in the central caliphate.

Kano, Katsina, and Zaria – the other large emirates in the central part of the caliphate – were also densely populated, and slaves formed upward of 50 percent of the population. Kano was surrounded by 40 walled towns within a radius of 50 km. Most people in Katsina emirate lived in the city, in an area southeast of the city that bordered Kano emirate, or in extreme southern Katsina (west of Kano). The population of Zaria was largely confined to the city and numerous towns on the northern border with Kano emirate. There were plantations in all these areas.

The earliest developments occurred in the Hausa region that became the center of the caliphate. The Muslim reformers assumed ownership of the land seized in the *jihad*, so that as the old governments were displaced, the peasants found themselves tenants on the vast holdings of the victors. Furthermore, many people were enslaved during the initial *jihad* (1804–1808) or in the rebellions that flared in Zamfara and elsewhere in 1817. Those who were slaves at the time of the *jihad* and did not flee to the camps of the Muslim reformers were reenslaved, whereas the war with Borno and the revolts of sympathizers beyond Hausaland resulted in more slaves. By 1820, the ideological phase of the war was over; the established governments had been overthrown in the name of Islam, and the way was set for the consolidation of Islamic government. Thereafter, *jihad* was largely confined to slave raiding as a means of expanding the frontiers of the caliphate and amassing slave labor for settlement within the caliphate.⁴²

The economic and social development of the caliphate is associated with the policies of Muhammad Bello, son of Usuman dan Fodio and leader of the pragmatic faction in the *jihad* leadership.⁴³ In contrast to Usuman's brother, Abdullahi, who shared power with Muhammad Bello through the creation of a dual caliphate, with centers at Gwandu and Sokoto, Muhammad Bello believed that only through the encouragement of trade and industry could the success of *jihad* be secured. Whereas Abdullahi wanted to continue fighting at almost any cost, in the expectation that the purification of the world would be rewarded in heaven, Muhammad Bello sought to regularize caliphate government. This required compromises with the Fulani clan leaders, who were not always the most devout Muslims but who had formed the backbone of the military. These clan leaders, together with truly religious leaders, became the landowners in whom Bello invested the future of the caliphate.

The scale of slave holdings in the central emirates can be assessed from the observations of Imam Imoru, the learned jurist and author whose knowledge of the Sokoto Caliphate, where he was born, and the Muslim centers along the trade routes to Asante, where he lived for many years, was extensive:

There are slave owners in Hausaland who have purchased 100 to 200 slaves, and there are some slave owners with 400 or 500 slaves. But in my lifetime, I have heard of only one person who was not an official, who had 1,000 slaves in Kano: his name was

Kaushe... In Hausaland, commoners buy slaves, but they are unable to buy 1,000 of them. Officials have more than 1,000 because they do not buy them: they seize them during war campaigns.⁴⁴

Local tradition remembers Kaushe as the wealthiest merchant in Kano, but there were many others who had large holdings too – on the scale that Imoru claims.

The plantations of the aristocracy fell into three categories. First, individuals had private holdings. Second, estates were attached to particular offices. Third, aristocratic lineages owned estates collectively. M. G. Smith, in his analysis of the Zaria economy, identified fifty-one plantations (*rinji*) owned by the Zaria aristocracy around 1900.⁴⁵ These ranged in size from small estates, such as the 40 slaves at Hanwa, a few kilometers from Zaria, to the huge one at Taban Sani, with its population of 3,000.⁴⁶ The Emir of Kano had a number of plantations scattered throughout the countryside; the largest included estates at Nasarawa, just outside one of the city walls; at Fanisau, which also served as a country estate; and at Wudil, southwest of Kano. In Katsina, Tuareg and other merchants had plantations at Shibdawa, Doro, Ingawa, and other towns southeast of the city, whereas in the far southern part of the emirate enterprising merchants settled slaves to grow cotton and grain – the cotton being exported to southern Kano to supply the textile industry there; the grain entering desert-side trade.⁴⁷

This plantation economy spread to the south within a few decades after the *jihad* was won in the central emirates. Bauchi was the first to benefit. The local Fulbe population already had dry-season camps, which were based around slave villages that grew foodstuffs for the nomadic population. These became the basis for the development of plantations that encouraged the settlement of nomads. There were at least fourteen Fulani plantation settlements in the Bauchi area before the *jihad* was won there; subsequently, slaves were settled around the emirate capital, and other towns that had their own plantations were founded or seized to the south, especially at Wase.⁴⁸ These developments marked the extension of the plantation system to the south. Bauchi itself became a Hausa town, so that the concentration of population in its vicinity represented a cultural extension of Hausaland.

The major developments in the southern parts of the caliphate took place in Yola (in the east), Nupe (due south of Hausaland), and Ilorin (in the heart of the old Oyo state). In these three locations, slave raiding and frontier warfare resulted in the massive concentration of slaves. Yola, located on the Benue River near several Jukun states that had dominated the region since the sixteenth century at least, became the capital of the Emirate of Fombina (Adamawa), which geographically became the largest emirate in the caliphate. The Fulbe in the Benue valley were able to unite against a diverse population. The allegiance to Sokoto provided the basis of cooperation for widely scattered Fulbe clans which coalesced around the first Emir of Yola, Adamu, and successfully established a state. Yola was founded in the 1850s, the Fulani forces swept the

plains of the Benue valley clean of people, and then war captives were settled on plantations in the deserted savanna near Yola. Already by 1853, the Emir of Yola, Muhammad Lawal, had “all his slaves settled in rumde or slave villages where they cultivate grain for his use or profit.”⁴⁹ Chomyel Abba, Doulabi, Golomba, Langui, Wuro Dole, Kirngabu, Konkol, Pette, and Yolel were new plantation villages near Yola that were settled after 1850, whereas nearly all the villages in Namtari, Girei, and Gurin districts were also slave plantations. In this way, the Yola region once again was populated, but the terms of occupancy were based on slavery.⁵⁰

In Nupe, a similar development occurred. The first capital of the *jihad* forces was at Raba, an important crossing point for caravans on the Niger River. But Raba was destroyed in the civil war that was associated with *jihad* in Nupe. When the capital was shifted to Bida in 1857, the center of political and economic development moved inland from the Niger valley to a more defensible position.⁵¹ While there may well have been plantations in the Raba period, the growth of slave settlements (*tungazi*) was truly astonishing after 1857. Virtually the whole of Nupe was slave, with the major settlement of war captives taking place between 1859 and 1895 (see Table 9.2). Many of these slave villages consisted of resettled Nupe prisoners, seized in the civil wars and forced to live under the new regime (see Table 9.3). Because they were culturally part of Nupe society, the terms of slavery appear to have been different than for slaves brought from elsewhere. Their terms of servitude involved tribute payments to particular aristocrats, which set these captives off from those slaves seized south of the Niger or bought from merchants coming from the north. Nonetheless, even this variation in slavery is instructive. The *jihad* leadership interpreted its mandate in terms of servitude. Subjugated people were expected to pay for their resistance; those who refused could be sold to traveling merchants.

The growth of the plantation sector in Nupe was a product of the policies of Emir Masaba (1859–1873), who followed the example of Muhammad Bello and the northern emirs in using slaves for economic development. Foreign demand for slaves still existed during Masaba’s reign, but he believed that slave labor could produce commodities in demand on the Niger River. European merchants had opened the Niger and Benue to direct trade with Europe by the late 1850s; shea butter – wanted for its oil – and peanuts were the “legitimate” goods exported from Nupe. Between 1864 and 1879, shea butter exports rose from less than 7 tons to almost 1,500 tons, and by the first decade of the twentieth century, the volume exceeded 8,000 tons. Peanuts became important more slowly; by the first decade of the twentieth century, exports varied between 500 and 2,000 tons per year; in the previous two decades, peanut sales were nowhere near as important as in the Senegambia region.⁵²

The importance of slavery in the Ilorin area is more difficult to assess, but the trend there appears to have been similar to the pattern in Nupe and Yola. Ilorin emerged triumphant in the 1830s. The old city of Oyo was destroyed,

TABLE 9.2. *Foundation Dates of Nupe Tungazi*

District	1857–1859	1859–1873	1873–1882	1882–1895	1895–1901
Lemu	30	386	137	168	19
Jima	7	149	109	20	0
Kachia	4	35	136	7	2
Badeggi	0	60	71	47	1
Kutigi	8	52	20	66	35
Mokwa	6	12	1	3	0
Total	55	694	474	311	57

Source: Michael Mason, "Captive and client labor and the economy of the Bida Emirate, 1857–1901," *Journal of African History* 14:3 (1973), 459.

TABLE 9.3. *Ethnic Origins of Settlers on Tungazi*

Ethnic group	1857–9	1859–73	1873–82	1882–95	1895–1901
Nupe ^a	40	406	310	200	38
Yoruba ^b	1	56	19	11	–
Afenmai	–	11	2	3	–
Igbirra	–	6	1	1	–
Gbari	1	11	9	8	1
Koro	–	–	1	–	–
Bassa	–	–	1	–	–
Kamberri	3	1	5	1	–
Hausa	4	20	11	6	–
Fulani	2	14	15	9	1
Unknown	–	79	–	–	17
Total	51	694	374	239	57

^a Includes Bini, Ebe, Gbedegi, Cekpa, Benu, Dibo, Agabi, Gwagba, and "Mokwa'.

^b Includes 'Yoruba', Yagba, Bunu, Akoko, and Igbomina.

Source: Mason, "Captive and client labor and the economy of the Bida Emirate, 1857–1901," 460.

and the massive flight of Oyo refugees that had begun a decade and more earlier left the area to the west of Ilorin deserted. Ilorin pursued the *jihad* against the Yoruba states in the south, and captives were settled around Ilorin to repopulate the northern Yoruba country. Ilorin was the center of a thriving slave trade until the last decade of the nineteenth century; slaves were brought from further north, and Yoruba merchants from the south, who were granted immunity from the continuing hostilities, came to Ilorin to buy slaves.⁵³ Although the development of a plantation economy around Ilorin was not as pronounced as in Nupe and Yola, there was no other means by which the population of Ilorin could have been promoted.

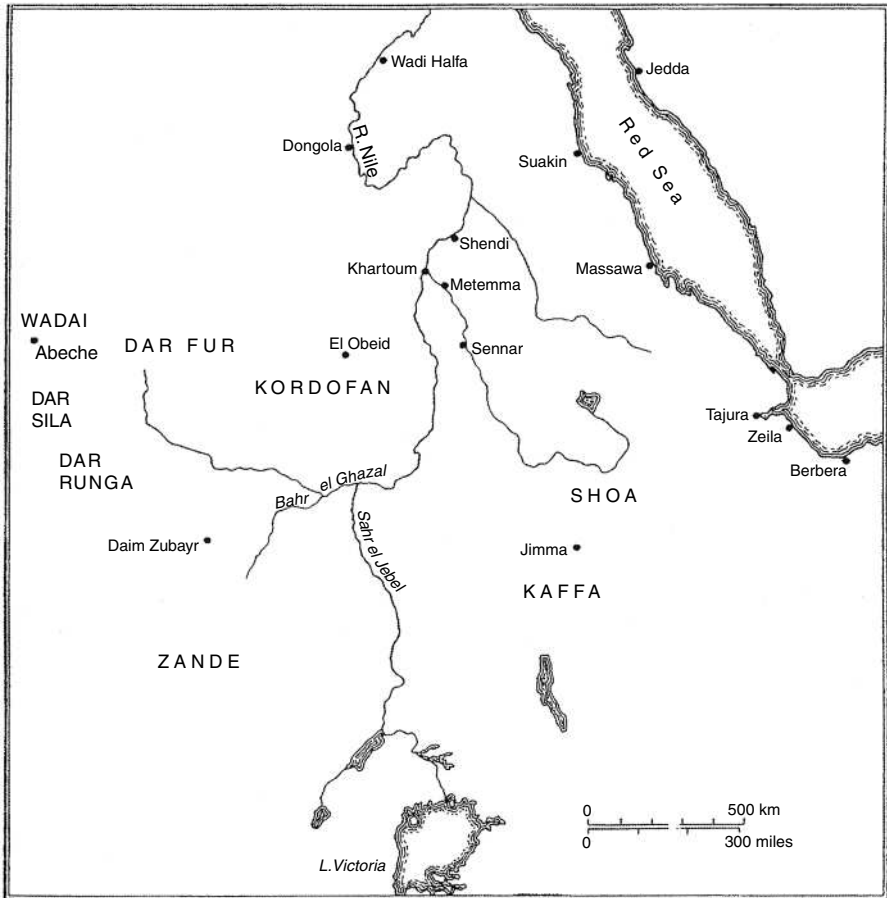
The Region East of Lake Chad

The agents of Islamic reform came later to the region east of Lake Chad. The dominant influence there was external – the Turkish regime in Egypt – and *jihad* became a significant factor only in the 1880s when local reaction against Egyptian colonialism coalesced in the Nilotic Sudan under the Mahdi. Nonetheless, the trend toward greater concentration of slaves and their use in production was similar to the pattern in the western and central Sudan, and the division between a northern phase – roughly before mid-century – and a southern expansion of slavery – in the second half of the century – was also similar. The initial expansion in productive slavery was centered in Wadai, Dar Fur, and the Nile valley above Sennar, but as slave raiding, ivory hunting, and political consolidation spread southward, slavery became more prevalent there too.

In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Wadai, Dar Fur, and the Funj Sultanate of Sennar were the centers of slavery. The concentrations of slaves in Dar Fur and Sennar had already been assembled in the eighteenth century. As late as 1825, the sultan's garrison villages around Sennar – inhabited by slaves since the seventeenth century – had an estimated population of 30,000 while other aristocrats owned thousands of other slaves.⁵⁴ In Dar Fur, the policy of settling slaves on Jabal Marra and elsewhere, which had been pursued by the sultans of the eighteenth century, continued. The influx of merchants from the Nile and the seizure of Kordofan from Sennar accelerated the accumulation of slaves.⁵⁵ Wadai began a period of expansion in the first decade of the nineteenth century that resulted in the acquisition of slaves too. Benefiting from the war between Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate, the Wadai army marched on Bagirmi, which had been a dependency of Borno. This initiated a general push toward the south, which allowed the Wadai state to export slaves and other goods across the Sahara via a new trade route opened in the nineteenth century. Under the reign of Muhammad Ali (1858–1874), 12,000 to 15,000 people from Bagirmi were brought to Abeche, the Wadai capital. Many of these people were slaves already, but even those who technically were free men suffered. The Wadai sultan also had slave settlements scattered throughout the ten districts of the country.⁵⁶

The major changes occurred along the Nile valley after the Turko-Egyptian conquest of Sennar in 1820. Whereas slaves were already numerous around Sennar, there were few slaves to the north of the Nile confluence. In the Shaiqiya country, for example, there were hardly any slaves, in sharp contrast to the capital. At the time of the Egyptian conquest, there were only 4,500 slaves between Wadi Haifa and the Fourth Cataract, amounting to approximately 4 percent of the population. By the end of the nineteenth century, slaves constituted a third of the population.⁵⁷

The injection of vast numbers of slaves into the riverine districts was a consequence of Egyptian policies. In the quest for slave recruits for the Egyptian



MAP 6. The Eastern Sudan in the Nineteenth Century.

army from 1820 to 1840, new captives became so numerous that the domestic market was flooded. Egyptian soldiers were often paid in slaves, who were then sold; occasionally, military expeditions were so successful that it was impossible to export all the captives. The Egyptian government also accepted slaves as payment for taxes, although eventually coin largely replaced slaves in this capacity. Sometimes, government forces simply commandeered slaves when it was necessary to fill export quotas. All of these measures assured the increased circulation of slaves within Sudanese society, so that an institution that had once been controlled by the Funj aristocracy now became common among merchants and small landholders.⁵⁸

After 1840, the Sudanese were able to supply the slave market themselves, so that the role of Egyptian military expeditions declined in importance. At the time of the conquest, the indigenous merchants fled to the south, and as they

returned to their homes once the new regime demonstrated its intention to promote economic development, these merchants had consolidated commercial links that were essential in the expansion of the slave trade. The existing merchant class benefited from Egyptian rule to the extent that many individuals began to buy land along the river and settle slaves to farm. The introduction of improved irrigation devices, imported from Egypt, was associated with this agricultural expansion. Because irrigation devices were taxed, landowners were encouraged to exploit their land intensively, and the low price of slaves meant that slave labor expanded rapidly. By 1845, the region along the Blue Nile had come under extensive cultivation, for example. Dry-season cultivation of the river banks expanded with the construction of numerous waterwheels; wet-season cultivation away from the river was also extended.⁵⁹

The new landowners did not rely exclusively on slave labor; a system of agricultural credit already existed that permitted speculators in grain to extend their control over the peasant communities. Known as *sheil*, this system allowed creditors to collect their debts at harvest time, but often debtors could not pay and had to agree to future labor services on the creditor's land. Another traditional labor contract, *teddan*, gave the worker a fixed share of the crop, negotiated at the time of planting, but gradually contract workers lost out to slaves, who were not given the traditional compensation. Now contract workers were largely those who were in debt.

The consolidation of land holdings and the importation of slaves pushed many peasants off the land, particularly Danaqla, Shaiquiya, and Ja'aliyin peasants, who went south as merchants. They traveled throughout the Jellaba commercial network and returned north only if they acquired slaves and could purchase or reclaim land. These migrants usually left their women and children behind, in part because they could not afford to take them, considering the expense and risks involved in long-distance travel, and in part because the presence of women in the riverine communities protected the interests of their husbands and fathers in local land claims.

Slaves were also enrolled in the private armies of the merchant-adventurers who benefited most from Egyptian occupation, with its concern to acquire slaves for export to Egypt. Perhaps the most successful of these Jellaba was one Jali merchant, the famous al-Zubayr, who settled in the Bahr el Ghazal in 1856 with an army of 1,000 troops. His son, Sulaiman, had even more soldiers, an estimated 6,400 stationed at 31 *zeribas* in 1878.

Slaves were involved in agricultural production, both along the Nile River and in the *zeriba* country to the south and west. Al-Zubayr's center at Daym Zubayr was surrounded by hundreds of farms and plantations. His ability to send thousands of slaves north through Kordofan depended on this agricultural production, as well as his commercial contacts with the Rizeiqat Arab nomads and the Zande principalities. Sulaiman consolidated this productive and commercial system further. At one center alone, he stationed a force of 1,500 soldiers, who maintained control over a subject population of 11,000

farmers. This *zeriba* system stretched to Dar al-Kuti in the west and into Zande country to the southwest.⁶⁰

In the 1880s, the foreign occupation of the Nilotic Sudan temporarily ended, with the consolidation of the Mahdist state after 1884, but slavery continued to play an important role in the local economy. Indeed, the Mahdist state relied as heavily on slave labor as other reform governments across the savanna. The major change under the Mahdist state was the collapse of the export trade in slaves – effectively eliminated because of the British and Egyptian blockade. The termination of the trade meant, however, that slaves were now directed exclusively into the local economy. Even if the number of new captives decreased – and it seems likely that organized enslavement was on a smaller scale for military reasons – the incidence of slavery in the Nilotic Sudan did not fall off.⁶¹

Furthermore, the armies of the *zeriba* system, many of which pledged their loyalty to the Mahdi, continued to operate, even though they could not export slaves and ivory as efficiently as had been possible under Turkish-Egyptian rule. Trade continued north through Wadai and Dar Fur, which allowed the importation of firearms necessary to maintain military supremacy. The result was a series of wars in the south. These culminated in the career of Rabeh Fadlallah, a disciple of the Mahdi, who swept across the area south of Wadai, seizing Bagirmi in the late 1880s and Borno in 1893. Rabeh too relied on slaves, but he never consolidated his rule sufficiently to establish a viable plantation economy.⁶²

The Ethiopian highlands participated in the general expansion in the incidence of slavery. The proximity of the area to the markets of Arabia and Egypt encouraged the continuation of the slave trade; the commercial domination of Muslim merchants meant that developments in the creation of a slave economy were similar to those that took place in the northern savanna, although *jihad* only affected the Somali coast in the last decade of the century and hence was not an important factor in most of the area.

The proportion of slaves in the general population of Christian Ethiopia and the various Galla and Muslim principalities was very high throughout the nineteenth century. In the province of Shoa in the 1840s, for example, “from the governor to the humblest peasant every house possesses slaves of both sexes, in proportion to the wealth of the proprietor.”⁶³ The same was true in Jimma and Kaffa, two of the southern principalities, where at least half the population was slave. In 1897, it was reported that the slave population of Kaffa numbered 80,000.⁶⁴ The most substantial holdings were those of the aristocracy, whether Christian or Muslim, with some officials reportedly possessing several thousand slaves.

These estimates, as scattered and rough as they are, help establish that slavery had been transformed in the northern savanna and at least in parts of the Ethiopian region. Slavery had become essential to production. Despite the ties to the outside world through the export of some “legitimate” commodities,

this transformation was essentially an internal development. Productive slavery was already an established feature of Muslim savanna society, but in the nineteenth century it expanded to an unprecedented level. Other forms of slavery, including the use of slaves in the military, government administration, and harems, continued too. Nonetheless, the exploitation of slave labor in production was the characteristic feature of the era.

The Organization of the Plantation Sector

The organization of the plantation sector included a variety of work regimes and management strategies. In some cases, slaves worked in a regimented fashion on the fields of the master under an overseer who was either slave or free. Plantation crops were the same throughout the savanna, there being more variations with latitude than between regions across the savanna. Cotton, indigo, tobacco, sorghum, bulrush millet, pepper, and vegetables were staple crops almost everywhere. Slaves usually had their own fields, too, which they worked during their spare time. In other cases, slaves lived in their own villages and were subject to fixed payments; in these less regimented arrangements, slaves sometimes worked a central field together but often farmed their own fields separately. Slave masters usually could extract more labor from slaves when tight management was maintained, but sometimes it was in the interest of the master to allow greater autonomy, especially over slaves born into captivity. Often labor obligations changed as slaves were assimilated, so that individual estates and villages could combine a number of work regimes.⁶⁵

On most plantations in the Islamic states, slaves lived in their own quarters, working for their masters five or six days each week and occasionally the whole week.⁶⁶ Usually, they were in the master's field from sunrise until 2.00 P.M., these times coinciding with two of the five regular prayers said during the day by Muslims, as Hugh Clapperton, the British envoy to the Sokoto Caliphate in 1824, observed at Magaria, near Sokoto, where some Caliphate nobles had their estates:

When the time for cultivating the ground and sowing the seed comes on, the owner points out what he requires, and what is to be sown on it. The slave is then allowed to enclose a part for himself and family. The hours of labor, for his master, are from daylight until mid-day [2 p.m.]; the remainder of the day is employed on his own, or in any other way he may think proper. At the time of harvest, when they cut and tie up the grain, each slave gets a bundle of the different sorts of grain, about a bushel of our measure, for himself. The grain on his ground is entirely left for his own use, and he may dispose of it as he thinks proper.⁶⁷

Clapperton's observations confirm the essential features of plantation organization. The main field belonged to the master, with separate gardens for the use of slave families. Usually after the 4.00 P.M. prayer, slaves worked their own gardens, unless there were special assignments on the master's land. Some of

the provisioning was the responsibility of the master, including the bundle of grain from the main field, and almost certainly the midday meal that broke the day's labor. Slaves were expected to feed themselves except during the time when they were actually employed on the master's behalf. Masters normally provided one item of clothing per year for each slave and a spouse for young people born into slavery, as well as those first-generation slaves who had proved themselves. In all cases, slave children belonged to their mother's master, and he could assign them tasks that would remove them from their parents. In most communities, the sale of slave children was rare. Public opinion was strongly against sale of those born into slavery. Legally, masters still had the right to sell, but it was usually exercised only in cases related to the settlement of a debt, inheritance decisions in which the master's family could not divide the slaves evenly among children, or bad behavior on the part of individual slaves.

During the rainy season, the principal labor was fieldwork. The slaves often worked in gangs under an overseer who was usually a slave himself. Failure to work hard enough or other insubordination was punished severely, often by whipping, being tied up in the sun, or being placed in irons. Ultimately, difficult slaves were sold. During the dry season, there were many other activities, including house building and repair. Houses were made from mud-bricks, which deteriorated in the rains. Roofs, too, had to be patched or made anew. Slaves also made mats, baskets, and cornstalk beds, transported manure to the fields, and loaded animals for caravan trading. Sometimes slaves were assigned petty trading on their master's account, and many slaves, perhaps most, were involved in textile production. Female slaves spun thread and male slaves wove. In all these activities, slaves often had time to pursue a craft or trade on their own, and some of the cloth or thread they produced could be sold for their own profit. Occasionally, masters allowed slaves even more time to work for themselves, in exchange for a cash payment in cowries or other currency. Slaves who were able to save money could apply to purchase their freedom. But there were many obstacles to emancipation, including the difficulty of buying the freedom of spouses and children and the hardships of old age, when the master would no longer be responsible. Even when slaves did secure their freedom, they often remained close to the former master's household, becoming a client of the master instead of a slave. As a consequence, some slaves – at least in Malinke society – chose to buy slaves of their own rather than to purchase their own freedom.⁶⁸ Technically, the slave of a slave still belonged to the master, but custom allowed the slave to benefit from his own property.

Throughout the savanna where slave plantations were important agricultural produce was distributed both locally and over considerable distances. The local economy depended on the movement of goods because harvest could vary from year to year. The general pattern involved the transport of grain northward toward the desert, where local conditions could be extremely good in a particular year but where there was a predictable demand for grain among the desert nomads, trans-Saharan merchants, and farmers whose crops had

failed. When local harvests in areas near the desert were very good, grain could be sent south or north, but these supplies could not be counted on every year. Consequently, many plantation owners along the southern edge of the Sahara settled slaves at several locations over a wide area. This provided some insurance against local crop failure, and it also permitted herds of livestock to be moved from one location to another, grazing on the stubble fields after harvest and in the process manuring the soil for the next planting season. Often desert nomads had plantations far to the south, located on the routes to savanna markets where livestock, desert salt, dates, and trans-Saharan imports were sold and where textiles, leather goods, and grain could be purchased cheapest. The nomads grazed their herds near these plantations while they traded. The presence of these herds in the savanna economy was a source of cheap transport. Camels, oxen, and donkeys were available to move farm produce, particularly grain and cotton, within the savanna.

In the central emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate, for example, cotton and grain were transported into the heavily populated textile belt of Kano and Zaria, which also produced cotton and grain, but not enough to supply the local market. The textile industry supplied much of West Africa, although there were many other textile centers elsewhere. The Maraka towns of Sinsani, Nyamina, and Banamba also were important, and the pattern was not so different there. The spinning and weaving of cloth, largely done by slave women and men respectively, had to be organized over an extensive area in order to supply the dyeing centers. In the Sokoto Caliphate, raw cotton was sometimes moved several hundred kilometers to places where it was spun and woven, and the cloth was then transported another hundred kilometers or more to the dyeing centers. The finished cloth was then exported widely.⁶⁹

The crops grown on the savanna plantations included millet, sorghum, cotton, indigo, cow peas, peanuts, and tobacco. The staples were grown during the rainy season on land that was sown shortly after the first rains, either in late May or June, depending on the year and the latitude. Other crops were planted on low-lying land or along river beds and relied on irrigation. These fields were often quite small, no more than gardens, but their output was significant because these lands were the source of wheat, cassava, tobacco, indigo, onions, peppers, and many vegetables and condiments. The irrigated plots often produced well into the dry season. Because of the different harvest times for grain, cotton, and irrigated produce, there was work for most of the year. The initial planting of grain was a peak period, because the labor of breaking the barren ground, even when some moisture had returned with the rains, was very heavy. Ridges and occasionally mounds were constructed on which the millet and sorghum were planted. These protected the shoots from being washed away during the torrential storms that characterized the rainy season and also retained water around the roots, despite the heavy runoff after each shower. Subsequently, there were two or more weedings, at which time the ridges and mounds were reconstructed. The work on both irrigated gardens and the grain

and cotton fields was done with a small, short-handled hoe. Irrigation was most frequently done with the *shadduf*, which in its most simple design included a container, usually a calabash or gourd, hanging by a rope on a pole that could be lowered to a water source, either a pond or pits hollowed out of a dry riverbed. If necessary, water was also carried to the irrigated plots.

Treatment of slaves could be severe. The account of an escaped slave seized at Keffi, one of the towns near the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, demonstrates this. At the orders of the town's official the slave was stripped of the clothes he had stolen and "sent to work in his plantations." The slave, depressed at his inability to carry off his escape, proved to be a poor field hand: "And thus, when I failed to do good work, I got many a flogging from the overseer of the governor's plantation; and one day it was said to me that as I was a worthless slave I should be sold in the market."⁷⁰ In cases of continued disobedience, such as the one reported here, slaves were sold and taken elsewhere. Because slaves knew well the risks involved in travel, they often feared this form of punishment above all others.

When the French administrator for Bamako investigated plantation slavery in the early years of the French occupation, he found that:

[S]laves are poorly fed, mistreated, and poorly clothed. Masters rarely give them their two days free (which is theirs) by custom. They prefer to feed them poorly and to be assured all their labor all the time. . . . Moko Tala, a slave of Touba, belongs to a master who "generously" gives three *moules* of millet [about six kilograms] for the rations of twenty-five slaves. The *services administratifs* estimated that a daily ration is one kilogram per person per day. Another slave called Hinebahlafe Konati, also of Touba, told us that the twenty slaves of his master were given four kilograms per day.⁷¹

Certainly conditions varied over the century and in different places, but whether or not slaves were treated as badly as those interviewed by Brevié, plantation slaves were involved in productive activities that demonstrate a type of slave regime that was far different from the stereotype of a benign African slavery.

Slavery in the Sahel

The sahel and southern Sahara was a region of specialized production and trade that relied extensively on slave labor. For ecological reasons, the inhabitants of this region had to be mobile; even farming populations were usually involved in trade for part of their livelihood, and when rains failed or were inadequate, people had to move elsewhere, at least temporarily. Population tended to concentrate around oases or valleys that had relatively easy access to water, and in these locations agriculture could be very productive. Millet especially grew well, so that farmers usually found themselves with a surplus to trade, unless the farmers were servile and were expected to provide substantial amounts of grain to their masters. Other farmers hunted ostriches, collected gum arabic, raised livestock, or produced salt, which tied them into

the commercial economy yet again. Indeed, in the nineteenth century, demand increased for commodities, either as exports to Europe (gum arabic, hides and skins, ostrich feathers) or as exports to the savanna (salt, livestock, grain). For those individuals who could control producers, either through slavery or other means, the nineteenth century was a period of relative prosperity.

The Moors, who lived to the north of the Senegal River, employed slaves in virtually every economic activity. Slaves cultivated millet in the flood plains of the retreating rivers and streams; they gathered gum arabic, the main export to Europe; they fetched water for livestock; they dug wells; and they gathered dry dung and wood for cooking. Caillié observed the collection of gum arabic in 1821, which was organized in gangs under the supervision of several *marabouts*, or free Muslims. A central camp was situated at the site of a well, where:

[T]he slaves cut straw to make huts; a single marabout superintends the slaves of his whole family, or of several of his friends; and he assembles them all, sometimes to the number of forty or fifty under the same hut. Every marabout sends as many slaves as he can spare.... The slaves fill their leather bags with water every morning, and furnished with a great forked stick, they traverse the fields in search of gum; as the gum-bearing trees are all thorny, this stick is used to knock off from the higher branches the lumps of gum which could not be reached by hand. As they pick it up they put it in their leather bags; and thus they spend the day, without any thing but a little water to refresh them.... The superintending marabout receives a proportion of the gum; the slaves work five days for their master, and the sixth for the superintendent, who thus comes in for the greater part of the produce.⁷²

The export of gum was as important as the export of slaves by 1800; the volume of the trade continued to expand, reaching record levels in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s.

Elsewhere along the southern edge of the desert, nomadic merchants and stock breeders also owned large numbers of slaves acquired in raids and through trade with the savanna. Slaves performed virtually all of the hard labor, including well construction and the watering of animals, the collection of manure and brush for fires, and the minding of herds of goats, sheep, and other animals. They loaded and unloaded the camels, prepared food, and waited on their masters. The servile farming population provided resting places for the nomads during livestock movements and caravan expeditions. The nomads themselves were engaged in livestock production and trade, which were closely integrated activities because herds had to be moved to obtain water and pasture. This necessity was turned to advantage for the purposes of trade. Camels and oxen could be loaded with salt and dates in the desert and driven south, where the animals could be pastured and the salt and dates sold. Grain, textiles, and other goods could then be taken back north into the desert, and while the livestock were in the savanna they could be used to transport local produce. Slave estates were vital staging points for integrating commercial activities that involved importing salt and dates, purchasing

grain and textiles, and selling transport services locally. In addition, the desert nomads made their animals available to the trans-Saharan trade and traded in slaves as well as “legitimate” goods.⁷³

The Tichit Moors dominated the salt trade from Ijil to Sinsani, Banamba, and other Maraka towns. One family, Haidara, operated salt caravans from Ijil through Banamba. Mulay al-Mahdi Haidara, for example, was a Sharif from the Oued Noun who traded throughout the Hodh in the 1850s. He then moved to Tichit and concentrated on wholesale trading; his sons became his agents in the towns to the south. Slaves were settled at Banamba to farm and conduct business for the family. These slaves took caravans to Ijil and Tichit to collect salt, which was later sold wholesale to Juula merchants. The Haidara salt caravans traveled to Gumbu, Nara, Nioro, Balle, Tichit, Nema, Walata, and Segala-Sokolo.⁷⁴

The desert-side trade periodically threw off migrants as a result of drought, localized hardship, or business opportunities. In the 1890s, for example, 3,000 people, many of whom had been slaves, left Tichit and other parts of the sahel because of drought in 1889. Many of these ex-slaves, the Maxanbinnu, settled at Nioro, Murja, Sanamba, Tienbugu, Kita, and Banamba and became agents in the trade between the desert and savanna. They had received their freedom in Tichit when drought conditions became severe. Some of these migrants became prosperous merchants and cultivators, such as the Sibi family, which was of Soninke origin. Some members of the family settled at Nema, where they acquired date-palm groves worked by slaves. Other kin moved to Banamba in the early 1890s, where they conducted a trade in salt, peanuts, grain, cloth, and hides and skins. The Banamba residents, too, employed slaves, including some who farmed.⁷⁵

The principal groups of Tuareg along the southern edge of the Sahara were the Kel Air (comprised of the Kel Ewey, Kel Tamat, Kel Fadey, and Kel Ferwan), the Kel Tademekket and Tingeregif (in the region of Timbuktu), and the Iwllammedan (including the Kel Attaram in the west and the Kel Dinnik in the east). There were other Tuareg centered in the Sahara (Kel Ajjer, Kel Ahaggar, and Kel Adragh or Ifogha), but they were less numerous than those operating in the sahel. Among the southern Tuareg, 70 to 90 percent of the population was servile, and many of these servile people were slaves (*iklan*) or freed slaves.⁷⁶

There were three principal corridors of trade and production in the central Sudan; one dominated by the Kel Ewey, another by the Kel Gress, and a third by the Kel Dinnik. A class of aristocrats (*imajeren*) had nearly exclusive control of wealth and power that was accumulated through the domination of the different strata in the social formation. The *imajeren*, who constituted about 10 percent of the Tuareg population, acted as if they were managers of large firms with quasipolitical jurisdiction. They alone decided on war and peace; from their ranks came the political leaders; and they were the main patrons of the Muslim clerics. The use of the Tuareg language (Tamashek) effectively served

as a specialized language that helped these nomads maintain the desert-side sector as a distinct network within the larger region of the central Sudan.⁷⁷

The Kel Ewey Tuareg, for example, operated from the Air Massif, which was conveniently located on the major trans-Saharan route north from the Sokoto Caliphate to Ghat, Ghadames, and North Africa. Along with hides and skins, ostrich feathers, gold, and other goods, several thousand slaves a year were exported along this route in the nineteenth century. The Kel Ewey were a major link in this network because they provided much of the camel transport, but “legitimate” trade and slave exports were only one aspect of their economy. These nomads had many camels, horses, cattle, goats, and sheep, and the sale of animals provided a large portion of their income. They were also involved in the salt and date trade, traveling several hundred kilometers to the east of the Air Massif to the salt oases of Kawar and Fachi, where they sold grain and manufactures for the salt cones and cakes of Bilma and other salt sites. This salt they transported to the savanna markets, particularly Zinder, Katsina, and Kano.⁷⁸

Tuareg social structure was characterized by gradations of status: Below the aristocrats were various categories of dependents, including tenant farmers, herders who worked on contract, vassals, and slaves. The status of each depended on the position held in the larger desert-edge system, and each was attached to a specific noble or group of nobles. Dependent groups of nomads received livestock from the nobles under a variety of contracts, and they were allowed to breed their own herds – but usually not camels.

Tuareg nobles settled slaves in the Air Massif and Damergu to the immediate south; they also had estates farther south in Tessawa, Damagaram, and elsewhere. In the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, the Kel Ewey leader (*anastafidet*), for example, had estates in the Air Massif and elsewhere, whereas the Imezureg, whose wealth in the late nineteenth century derived from the collection of ostrich feathers for the trans-Saharan trade, had a similar network. *Iklan* belonging to the *anastafidet* lived in several villages near Olelewa; not far away were the estates worked by slaves of the Imezureg, whose capital was at Gangara.⁷⁹

The Tuareg allowed their plantation slaves an amazing degree of movement. To some extent this was a natural feature of the environment. Slaves had to be free to move in case of drought, but the Tuareg allowed even greater liberty. Many of their slaves also traded, either for their masters or on their own account. Heinrich Barth, who traveled with a Tuareg caravan in 1850, visited one plantation near Tessawa. The estate belonged to Annur, one of the leading Kel Ewey figures in the nineteenth century and the leader of Barth’s caravan:

The estate is very extensive, and consists of a great many clusters of huts scattered over the fields, while isolated dumpalms give the whole a peculiar feature. The people, all followers and mostly domestic slaves of Annur, seemed to live in tolerable ease and comfort, as far as I was able to see, my companion introducing me into several huts. Indeed,

every candid person, however opposed to slavery he may be, must acknowledge that the Tawarek in general, and particularly the Kel owi, treat their slaves not only humanely, but with the utmost indulgence and affability, and scarcely let them feel their bondage at all. Of course there are exceptions.⁸⁰

Barth visited other Tuareg plantations on his journey, and he was surprised to find these located far to the south, in Katsina and Kano emirates in the heart of the savanna. These included estates owned by Annur and his brother, Elaiji. These brothers controlled the movement of thousands of camels and owned estates at Kazaure, Gezawa, Zinder, Damergu and the Air Massif, as well as at Tessawa.

The Tuareg allowed many of their slaves to pursue an occupation. Some slaves, once they had proven their loyalty, were given animals to herd, and as an incentive, the slaves were given a share in new animals and the right to dairy products. Settled slaves, who lacked close supervision for much of the year, were allowed to trade on their own account. The Tuareg even gave them goods to retail, especially salt and dates. Eventually, slaves might purchase their freedom and invest in caravan trade.

Many of the inhabitants of the most southerly estates of the Tuareg were *irewelen*, freed slaves who had been allowed to emigrate from the sahel but who maintained some contact with their former masters, often providing free accommodation and nominal tribute. These *irewelen* were particularly numerous in Katsina, Kano, and Zamfara, where many were called “Agalawa” or “people of the south.” These freedmen and their descendants became prosperous merchants in their own right.⁸¹

Some *irewelen* were nomadic, receiving livestock from their former masters on contract in much the same way that vassal groups of nomads often did. They tended these livestock, taking a portion of new stock and selling the dairy products of the herd as compensation. The nobles told these *irewelen* where to herd, and whenever the nobles wanted livestock to sell or to replenish their own herds, they took their animals. This system allowed the class of nobles to safeguard their own interests. In times of plenty, they distributed livestock to their dependents; in hard times, they took their animals back and indirectly forced their clients to emigrate. Slavery was essential to this system, for slavery was a principal means of acquiring new dependents who could be allowed to work their way up through the ranks. In the meantime, slaves performed most of the work for the nobles, including the care of livestock in the nobles’ camps, constructing and maintaining wells, and farming.⁸²

Assimilation of Slaves

Despite the prevalence of plantation slavery and other economic uses for slaves, many slaves could hope to achieve their freedom through hard work or emancipation from a pious owner, and some slaves actually were freed. This

patriarchal aspect of slavery was part of the Islamic tradition of slavery. Even some plantation slaves had opportunities that permitted social mobility. Hence the dichotomy between plantation slavery and other forms of slavery was not always a sharp one. Whereas the trend was toward the greater exploitation of slaves, the administrative and domestic uses attest to a resilience of social and political institutions that was remarkably different from practices in plantation America.

Because so many slaves were women, one feature of slavery in the Muslim savanna was the assimilation of females through concubinage and marriage and the automatic emancipation of children by slave women, if the master accepted paternity. Martin Klein's analysis of the French census data on slavery in the western Sudan has shown that female slaves often outnumbered male slaves by two to one, although this was not always the case.⁸³ In those *cercles* for which an attempt was made to tabulate the number of men, women and children, female slaves were more numerous than males. In a sample of 345,400 slaves, women formed 39.3 percent of the population, whereas the comparable proportions for males and children were 30.9 percent and 29.8 percent respectively (see Table 9.1). Klein argues that women were probably underrepresented in the sample, because those concubines and slave wives who had given birth may well have been excluded from the census. Nonetheless, by 1904, many slaves had escaped, and escapees more often than not were males; hence it is not possible to determine to what extent women were more numerous than men. Women formed 56 percent of the adult population of 244,300 slaves recorded in the census. Even though marriage and concubinage did serve as avenues leading to emancipation and assimilation, the sexual imbalance appears still to have existed.

Those women who were not concubines or wives of free men worked as hard as male slaves, and sometimes at the same tasks. While a sexual division of labor was common in textile production and farming, women were still expected to work as many hours as men, and because of child rearing and food preparation many women probably worked longer than men. Spinning and carding of cotton, for example, was a woman's occupation, but it took a woman eight hours to spin enough thread to keep a male slave weaving for an hour. Among the Maraka, the cultivation of indigo was woman's work, because women did the dyeing, but in many villages, both men and women worked in the fields, although usually not together. Men planted cotton; women harvested it.

Many savanna-based merchants were servile in origin but became prosperous men, owning many slaves of their own. These merchants adopted corporate names for themselves that revealed their origins but also provided a means of identification that proved useful in business. The more important of these groups in the central Sudan were the Agalawa, Tokarawa, and Adarawa.⁸⁴ These merchants spoke Hausa as their first language, not the Tuareg tongue. Their homes were in or around the Hausa towns of the Sokoto Caliphate

or the adjacent Hausa towns in the stretch of independent territory between the Caliphate and the Air Massif to the north. Many traded to Asante and Adamawa, dealing in kola nuts, salt, textiles, slaves, and other goods. Some amassed so many slaves that they established their own plantations. They did not treat their own slaves with the same leniency as the Tuareg. There was no reason to do so. It was possible to manage these slaves more closely, despite the itinerant trade in which merchants were involved, and as a result they allowed less autonomy for their slaves. After all, the humble origins of these merchants had necessitated hard work. Frugality in business and the desire for social mobility in caliphate society were not compatible with a particularly generous policy toward slavery. Instead, the Agalawa, Tokarawa, and Adarawa drove their slaves, using plantation output to provision their business operations and selling surplus on the market in order to raise more capital for their trade.

There are many examples of the gradual change in status of domestic slaves. It was possible for slaves in merchant households to acquire enough expertise and trust to operate on their master's account. A leading Hausa merchant in Abeche, the late-nineteenth-century capital of Wadai, is a case in point.⁸⁵ This man, Hasan Babalay, settled in Abeche sometime in the 1880s and established a flourishing commerce in slaves, ivory, livestock, ostrich feathers, textiles, kola nuts, and other goods. At the height of his business, he had twenty slave assistants in his firm, some of whom were responsible for caravans traveling to the slave-raiding lands south of Wadai, and one who accompanied a caravan across the Sahara. Babalay's business extended to Kordofan and Dar Fur in the east, Dar Runga and Dar Sila in the south, Bagirmi, Borno, and the Sokoto Caliphate in the west, and Cairo and Tripoli in the north. His use of slave assistants was part of a long-standing commercial tradition in Islamic Africa, and even when a trusted slave stole his capital in one trans-Saharan venture, he continued to rely on domestic slaves.

Indeed, Babalay's ancestry conveys the true dimensions of this tradition of commercial apprenticeship, for he was of Agalawa descent. His family apparently came from Kano Emirate, where many other Agalawa merchants also lived. Babalay established his business in distant Abeche in the 1880s, where he joined the prosperous, slave-owning merchant class of the Wadai capital. The successful operation of his firm required more than a staff of trusted assistants. To feed clients, slaves in transit, and the numerous pilgrims who also lodged at his house in Abeche, Babalay needed large quantities of foodstuffs. Again, commercial tradition dictated that much of this produce had to be grown on his own lands, undoubtedly by slave labor. Resident brokers housed visiting merchants free, in the expectation of profit from commission sales. Babalay had wives and concubines, thirty in all, to oversee this aspect of his business. We do not know how many slaves he had in the countryside, but it could easily have been hundreds, to judge by a comparison with the holdings of other successful merchants.

Beside their importance in commerce, slaves continued to be employed in the army, administration, and domestic service in the nineteenth century. The long tradition of such practices reserved a place for slaves in government and society, whether Muslim or Christian. It appeared to H. Salt, as he traveled through Ethiopia in the early nineteenth century, that:

The situation of slaves is rather honorable than disgraceful ... and the difference between their state and that of Western slaves is strikingly apparent. They have no long voyage to make, no violent change of habits to undergo, no outdoor labor to perform, no "white man's scorn" to endure, but on the contrary, are frequently adopted, like children, into the family.⁸⁶

Because this aspect of slavery was important, women and children continued to be in greater demand than men, despite the economically more significant function that men could perform. Nonetheless, most slaves still found themselves in an unenviable position, as a nineteenth-century tradition from Dar Fur makes clear:

The slaves must do the work in the house; if they are unwilling to work they must be beaten with the whip or must be beaten with the stick. Then they begin to cry [and] be willing to work. Their language is difficult; people don't understand them. If we find a girl among them, who pleases us, then she doesn't need to do any housework. I make her my wife, so that we can sleep together in bed and "eat the skin," so that we will have children. Then she becomes pregnant and has a child. If it is a boy, then everything is fine.⁸⁷

Slaves performed the menial labor of the household, except for the pretty females, who became the wives or concubines of the master. This practice was traditional in Islamic society, being no different than the customs that prevailed in the savanna from the medieval era until European colonialism ended slavery. There was no room for insubordination in either situation; servants had to perform their daily tasks, and women had to accept their sexual subjugation to the master. There was room for emancipation in Islamic society, as there always had been. For the woman, the birth of a child, even if not the desired male, brought eventual freedom. For the servant, hard work, some intelligence, and much loyalty were rewarded with greater responsibilities and *de facto* change in status, whether or not the master chose to grant legal freedom.

Emancipation, recognized as a pious act and therefore very common in societies dedicated to a renewal of faith, was a feature of savanna slavery that distinguished it from other slave systems. Deathbed grants, court decrees, arrangements for self-purchase, ransoming, and the freeing of concubines with children were common practices. Hence, masters could arrange to free those slaves who assisted on caravan journeys and who could be trusted to act as agents. Similarly, slaves who traded on their own account could be allowed to purchase their freedom by paying regular installments. The status of slave officials placed them in a category of persons that for most purposes should be included as "free." That slave officials were not technically free related to their

constitutional position. They held appointments that were defined as slave and that were not open to freeborn citizens. Nonetheless, their status should not be confused with that of most slaves, who never had access to such privileges.

In allowing slaves to earn a private income, masters recognized that the ownership of slaves had advantages other than the direct exploitation of their labor. In Bauchi, for example, slaves could hire themselves out by paying a fixed sum of cowries – 50, 100, or 300 – to their master each week or month, and for a sum of 5,000 cowries a slave could be free to work on his own for a whole year.⁸⁸ In the western Sudan, the amount paid to the master under similar arrangements varied widely. A Wolof slave paid about 35 kg of millet, whereas a Soninke slave was responsible for almost ten times that amount (337 kg). Klein has calculated that the average was 200 to 300 kg, roughly equivalent to the amount of grain needed to feed an adult in a year.⁸⁹

The range of uses to which slaves were put and the various avenues to freedom within Muslim society illustrate the particular operation of slavery as an institution in the northern savanna. But the context for these practices must be kept in mind. Most slaves not only lacked special privileges but also lived close to the subsistence level. They worked hard in the fields during the rainy season, spun and wove cotton during the dry season, carried firewood, repaired and built houses, and dug wells. They were granted their own plots and allowed to raise small livestock, but they were also expected to feed themselves when they were not working on the main plantation fields. Extra earnings from retail trading were reduced through payments to their masters, and even their free day or two per week could be canceled when necessary. The possibilities of social mobility, however, still existed, in large part because newly captured slaves were readily available. Islamic norms encouraged emancipation, but the distinguishing feature of slavery in the northern savanna was the close relationship between the practice of slavery and the availability of more slaves. Slaves could be freed because slaves were cheap and could be easily replaced.

Slavery on the Periphery

There were areas in the savanna where slavery was not particularly important, even in the nineteenth century. In the regions of the upper Volta basin, for example, slaves do not appear to have constituted a significantly large proportion of the population. The aristocracy of the small Mossi states had some slaves; these were concentrated in household establishments, although a few of the wealthiest members of the elite had villages of slaves that can be compared with the plantations common elsewhere in the Muslim savanna. The Muslim merchants of these Mossi states also bought slaves for their own households, and these slaves were most probably employed in a manner similar to other parts of the Islamic savanna, that is, for agriculture, domestic chores, textile production, and commercial agency. Blacksmiths, too, bought a few slaves to perform menial tasks if male or to become wives if female. Even the great

expansion in slave raiding that occurred on the frontiers surrounding these Mossi communities does not seem to have affected the course of slavery there.⁹⁰ Most of the slaves captured in the wars of Babatu and other warlords – especially among the Gurunsi – were sent south to Asante. Few appear to have been incorporated into local society. The peasant communities scattered through this region did not possess many slaves either. These peasants were more a source of slaves than employers of slaves. In times of famine and feud, slaves were exported, whereas the centers of political power, located in such towns as Sansanne Mango and Gambaga, were focal points for slave raiding into the countryside. Many of these towns recognized the political sovereignty of Asante until 1874, and slaves were forwarded to Kumasi as tribute.

Beyond the borders of the Islamic states, in the hill retreats of independent peasants, in walled towns of ousted aristocracies, and on the plains of the savanna, hidden by the vastness of space, were people who practiced forms of slavery that differed from the Islamic norm. These were the people who were subjected to slave raids and the expansive wars of the *jihad* states. Many were forced into tributary relationships. Others found themselves dependent on the very states they fought. Slavery appears to have been found everywhere, but the incidence was much lower than near the Islamic centers. The legal perception of the institution was based sometimes on kinship and sometimes on Islam, and the rate of assimilation varied. It is likely that the types of slavery found in these more segmentary societies were exceedingly old. A crucial dimension of this institution, however, was its marginality, in the sense that slavery among such people as the Margi, who lived on the borders of the Sokoto Caliphate, permitted the sale of individuals in times of crisis to maintain their independence from the Islamic states.⁹¹ Often the Margi and other people on the frontiers of the major states were forced to fight each other over scarce resources, including people who were passed on as tribute, so that the interaction between these societies and the Islamic states could be indirect and complex. Slavery was a vital institution in this relationship. It allowed the tight control over land and other resources among people who faced the perpetual danger of raids, famine, and the unexpected inability to trade for necessities. Enslavement and the slave trade connected the dominant pattern of slavery in the Islamic states with these peripheral areas. To consider them in isolation is to miss a fundamental feature that has influenced the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims of the savanna country for centuries.

Slavery in Central, Southern, and Eastern Africa in the Nineteenth Century

The Expansion of the External Enclaves

In the eighteenth century, Europeans and their Euro-African descendants owned slaves at scattered points along the coast. The greatest concentrations were near Luanda, Cape Town, and the Zambezi valley. Despite the relative isolation of these holdings from the main developments in the institution of slavery in African societies before 1800, these European enclaves were the basis of a new order in central, southern, and eastern Africa in the nineteenth century. As these European enclaves expanded, a modified version of the slavery of the Americas expanded too. Despite the presence of a few plantations owned by Brazilians in Dahomey and Angola and the attempts at plantation development in Sierra Leone and elsewhere on the upper Guinea coast from the 1790s to the 1820s, slave masters in West Africa generally developed slavery into a productive system without the American example. Slave masters adapted the practices and traditions of their own societies – Akan, Yoruba, Igbo, or otherwise – so that European conceptions of slavery continued to be marginal, even as the economic importance of slavery increased. The situation in the southern third of the continent, therefore, was different from the experience of West Africa.

A parallel can be found in the adaptation of Islamic views of slavery in the northern savanna, where slavery was reinterpreted over the centuries in terms of Islam. The consolidation of slavery in the Muslim context represented an ongoing adjustment to the spread of Islam, the continued trade across the Sahara and the Red Sea, and the use of slaves in a variety of functions – the military, administration, domestic service, concubinage, and production. This kind of transformation had been largely absent along the Atlantic shores of Africa where Christian Europeans were present. In the nineteenth century, this situation changed.

The expansion of the external enclaves was related to the development of plantation agriculture on the islands in the Indian Ocean and in the Gulf of Guinea, which provided an example for Europeans, Euro-Africans, and others on the mainland. Thousands of slaves were shipped to the offshore islands, initially as slaves and then as indentured workers, often under conditions tantamount to slavery. Because these islands were relatively close to Africa, their importance as plantation colonies continued longer than many places in the Americas. Efforts to patrol the waters of East Africa and the lower Guinea coast came relatively late, and consequently it was feasible to continue plantation slavery until the end of the century.

The Mascarenes were the first islands to benefit from this new attention.¹ After the Napoleonic wars, sugarcane, cotton, indigo, cloves, and other spices were grown for export. Sugarcane was by far the most important crop. Great Britain had seized these islands in 1810 and kept Mauritius and the Seychelles archipelago, but Réunion was returned to France. Planters on Mauritius and the Seychelles imported slaves from Africa during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, even though the trade was officially abolished to British possessions. Perhaps 20,000 slaves were imported between 1810 and 1820, but the trade gradually declined, until in the 1830s, the British islands looked to India for indentured labor and no longer sought African labor, although a few liberated slaves seized from slave ships in the Indian Ocean were landed on the islands. Réunion, by contrast, continued to receive slaves and *engagés à temps* throughout the first two-thirds of the century. The French added Nossi Bé and Mayotte in the Comoros in the 1840s, and although these islands never became as important as Réunion, sugarcane and other crops were grown there too. Nossi Bé and Sainte-Marie had an estimated 12,000 slaves in the early 1840s; Mayotte had 2,773 slaves in 1846. After the annexation of these islands, the French passed an emancipation decree that prompted many local Muslim slave owners to immigrate to other islands in the Comoros, especially to Anjouin, where a plantation economy already existed.² This displacement enabled the French to grant concessions to planters from Réunion and also to substitute the *engagé* system for slavery, so that the importation of labor from East Africa and Madagascar continued in the middle decades of the century. While these *engagés* were technically free on the French islands, they were slaves when they left Africa.

The heritage of European settlement in the southern third of Africa was also a component of the transformation in slavery that occurred in the nineteenth century. The mainland Portuguese communities in Zambezia and Angola expanded, whereas São Tomé and Príncipe once again became a focus of plantation agriculture after two centuries of stagnation. In South Africa, the Dutch settlers at Cape Town spread inland to the high veld. The abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the emancipation of slaves in the Americas encouraged the intensified use of slaves in these places. In effect, the locus of plantation agriculture and other ways of exploiting slaves shifted nearer

to the source of slaves in Africa because of the greater risks in transporting slaves across the Atlantic and because slavery itself was abolished in one place after another. As was the case with the Mascarenes and Comoros, farmers and planters on the mainland could compete because the cost of labor was cheaper than in the Americas. A peculiar hybrid emerged that was neither American nor African.

Despite the distant roots in the Americas and Europe, there were a number of unique features of the new slavery in its African context. First, the most important sector was on the East African coast and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba, where Omani and Swahili slave owners developed a plantation economy to produce cloves, coconuts, and grain. In this sector, while largely external in origin (the Omanis came from Arabia; capital came largely from India; the inspiration for plantation agriculture came from the Mascarenes and Comoros, and thus indirectly from the Americas), the form of slavery was Islamic, not European or Christian. Nonetheless, this plantation system was similar to the other sectors on the Mascarenes, Comoros, São Tomé, Príncipe, and the mainland Portuguese enclaves in that production was primarily for foreign markets – in this case principally India – and most slave owners had non-African origins.

Secondly, abolitionism influenced the form of slavery in the European sectors; this new slavery was not a simple copy of earlier forms of American slavery because the rhetoric of abolition required that slave masters should disguise the nature of their exploitation under a variety of new terms. Among the Boers, slaves were called apprentices, as a means of satisfying British laws of emancipation that allowed a period of apprenticeship after the ending of slavery in 1834; except that the movement of the Boers inland beyond the effective control of British rule resulted in the continuation of the apprenticeship system until the Anglo-Boer war in 1899–1902. Similarly, the French and Portuguese purchased slaves for use in agriculture and other economic activities but called them *engagés*, *libertos*, or other names. In all these cases, the presence of the British at Luanda, Cape Town, Zanzibar, and other places required the adaptation of slavery to appease British diplomatic pressure. The new ideology – European in origin – was paternalistic and capitalist. Slavery was perceived in terms of protecting “primitive” Africans as they experienced the transition to civilized life; the new labor systems were intended as a related transition toward the establishment of wage labor, with the abolition of slavery as an inevitable by-product.

Thirdly, many slave owners, particularly in Portuguese areas, were Euro-Africans or non-European immigrants. These included Ambakistas, Indians, and others. Hence the presence of Omanis and Indians in Zanzibar and Pemba was not so different, in that these slave owners also identified with an alien origin, although there were differences between those who associated with Europe, the Islamic Middle East, and India. The Ambakistas spoke Portuguese and were nominally Catholic; the Indians came from Goa, the Portuguese port

in India, and other places. These varied ethnic origins among the entrepreneurs of this new slave economy fell on a continuum from those who were Europeans, Omanis, or Indians to persons of mixed Afro-Omani, Afro-Indian, or Afro-European ancestry to African slave owners whose origins were connected with the external presence as mercenaries, commercial agents, or slave descendants. Groups like the *achikunda* (who were associated with the Portuguese *prazo*-holders in the Zambezi valley), the Yao (who were agents for the Swahili and Omani plantation sector of the East African coast), and the Merina (who provided many of the slaves for the Mascarenes) developed plantations of their own that were linked to the external-centered systems of the Portuguese, Omani, and French.

Lineage slavery still existed, but in the context of commercial expansion its relative importance decreased. Lineage-based societies continued to serve as a source of slaves for raiders; they were the prey for marauding bands and consequently incorporated slaves when possible as a means of enlarging kin groups. Nonetheless, lineage slavery was not the most dynamic institution in the nineteenth century, although under some circumstances a partial transformation of slavery occurred, especially when slavery was adapted to military ends or for hunting purposes. Thus the Cokwe and the warrior bands of the *dificane* used slaves as a means of incorporating women and soldiers on a scale that prevented the functioning of real kinship structures, even though slavery was interpreted in the context of kinship.

The Omani-Swahili Sector

The first clove plantations on Zanzibar were in production by the early 1820s, primarily as the result of experiments by Saleh b. Haramil al-Abray, born in Muscat in 1770. He traveled to Seychelles, Ile de France (Mauritius), and Bourbon (Réunion) and observed the French plantation economy. Saleh and other Omani merchants experimented with sugarcane and other crops first, but cloves proved most successful. Sultan Sayyid Sa'id of Oman saw in the clove industry the possibilities of a personal fortune. He moved to Zanzibar in 1828 to promote his own interests in clove production. This included the confiscation of Saleh's plantations and the purchase of other rival estates. Thus Sayyid Sa'id became the largest clove producer on the island, and despite the entry of other planters and merchants into the industry, the sultan's family never lost its preeminence in the trade.³

After the modest beginnings in the 1820s, the clove industry grew dramatically in the 1840s. Exports rose from 280,000 pounds per year in 1840, to more than 1 million pounds per year in 1843–1844, to almost 5 million pounds per year in the 1850s. By 1845, private estates outproduced the royal estates by almost two to one, and clove production spread to the neighboring Pemba Island. The expansion on both islands continued for the next few decades, until a hurricane destroyed many of the trees on Zanzibar in 1872. Because of this

disaster, Pemba exported more cloves than Zanzibar, reaching two-thirds to three-quarters of clove sales by the 1890s.⁴

The slave population of Zanzibar Island rose from about 15,000 in 1819, before the boom in clove production, to significantly more than 100,000 by the 1830s. For the rest of the century, estimates, some of them partial calculations, indicate that the slave population remained at this level or higher. Mortality rates among slaves were extremely high – 15–20 percent per year – which meant that 9,000 to 12,000 slaves had to be imported each year to maintain the slave population. In 1860, estimates indicated that the majority of slaves arriving at Zanzibar, perhaps 15,000 out of 19,000 people, came from the area of Lake Malawi. The other 4,000 came from the Mrima coast, opposite Zanzibar.⁵

By the 1870s, the sultan had some 4,000 slaves on his plantations, and other wealthy planters had 1,000 to 2,000 slaves, all supervised by overseers. A large plantation could contain 10,000 trees, and some planters owned more than one. In 1895, one planter, Abdalla bin Salim, owned 6 plantations with 3,000 slaves. His wife owned 7 smaller plantations with 1,600 slaves. Five other planters at this time owned more than 250 slaves each. In Pemba, Mohamed bin Juma bin Said had seven plantations and 2,000 slaves, and he had holdings in Zanzibar too. Other planters on Pemba reputedly owned as many as 500 slaves each. By 1860, Indians owned 8,000 slaves in Zanzibar, two-thirds of which were on plantations. The rest were domestic servants, porters, and menial laborers in the Indian commercial firms. The largest owner was Jairam Sewji, who owned 460, although most Indian households had only a few slaves. Despite the scale of some holdings, there were many with fifty or sixty slaves, and the average size was about 30 slaves per plantation.⁶

There were two clove harvests, the heaviest in November and December and a protracted, smaller one from July to September. The clove buds had to be broken off from the tips of the branches without damaging the delicate limbs. Each tree had to be picked several times, and because the major harvest overlapped with the rainy season, working conditions were unpleasant and the task of drying the cloves was difficult. Supervision of slaves had to be carefully arranged to prevent damage to trees. Female slaves were responsible for separating the buds from the stems and spreading the cloves on mats to dry. Then they were packed in sacks for transport to town. Masters hired out their slaves during harvests when they could afford to do so, and many slaves were paid according to the amount of cloves they picked. Because of the delicate nature of the labor, piece-work provided an incentive for careful and thorough attention that might seem inconsistent with plantation slavery but is logical in the context of this particular system. Slaves who were careless or lazy were beaten and deprived of holidays. Slaves were provided with food, clothing, and accommodation, and in most cases they also received a small plot of land for a garden.⁷

The plantation sector spread to the mainland opposite Pemba and Zanzibar, especially along a 110-km stretch of coast from Mtwapa to Mambrui, but

including other places as far north as the Banadir coast and as far south as Mozambique.⁸ Grain, coconuts, and oil seeds were the principal exports, although some other foodstuffs and gum copra – used to make varnish – were somewhat important. The earliest developments began in the 1830s, with the major expansion occurring in the 1850s and 1860s. The peak of the plantation economy was reached between 1875 and 1884, when there were 43,000 to 47,000 slaves on the Kenyan coast, which represented 44 percent of the population; the largest concentrations were in the Malindi-Mambrui region, near Takaungu, and in the area of Lamu and Pate, although there were smaller numbers of slaves at Mombasa, Vanga, and other places.⁹

One of the earliest centers was Takaungu, founded in 1837 by the Mazrui family who had fled Mombasa to escape Zanzibar rule. In the 1840s, gum copra – gathered in the Watamu area – was the main export; thereafter foodstuffs were more important. The period of greatest expansion occurred in the 1860s when such slave villages as those at Konjora were founded. Slave villages usually had 300 to 400 slaves, organized under an overseer. Now maize and millet were grown for export, and by the 1880s, the Takaungu area was exporting 5,400 tons of grain, sesame seed, rice, and beans per year.¹⁰

Some of the largest plantations were established in the Malindi-Mambrui region after 1861, when Malindi was resettled. Malindi had been an ancient town but was abandoned in the late eighteenth century. Immigrants from Zanzibar moved to the mainland to grow grain, and by 1884, exports were almost 13,500 tons per year, twice the output of Takaungu. By this time, there were several hundred individual farms, with the size of slave holdings averaging from ten to twenty slaves. Some masters, however, had several locations, with one owner having ten farms. Suleiman bin Abdallah al-Mauli was one of the largest planters; in the 1890s, he owned 261 slaves who worked 2,500 hectares of grain as well as several coconut groves. He was one of six planters owning more than 2,500 hectares. There were many other planters with holdings that ranged from 24 to 120 slaves. In fact, the 13 largest planters, each of whom had over 1,200 hectares of land, accounted for 56 percent of the cultivated land at Malindi. The total slave population reached 4,000 to 5,000 by 1873, reaching a peak of 6,000 in the late 1870s.¹¹

The other large concentration of slaves was on the coast opposite Lamu and Pate; in 1897, 9,624 slaves were counted, although the slave population was probably larger in the 1870s before the coastal area was hit by raids from the interior. Lamu exported grain to Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India, and other parts of the coast. By 1859, sesame was also a major export. The 3,900 tons exported in that year exceeded the volume of sesame sales from the rest of the coast combined. Rice, millet, maize, sorghum, beans, and coir completed the list of crops grown by slaves.¹²

There were fewer slaves at Mombasa, Gasi, Wasini, and Vanga, although slaves were involved in production at these centers. Of these, Mombasa was the most important. Agricultural holdings there averaged about 3 hectares – in

sharp contrast to the large plantations elsewhere. Only 3 landlords at Mombasa had more than 250 hectares each. Because Mombasa was older than Malindi, Takaungu, and other centers of plantation development the pattern of small holdings was already established before the years of economic expansion after mid-century. Farmers at Mombasa responded to the demand for grain as the market grew, but there was not sufficient land to develop extensive plantations. In 1884, almost 1,800 tons of millet were exported, which was only a tenth of the combined output of Takaungu and Malindi. The slave population was still relatively large, however. In 1897, there were 4,667 slaves in Mombasa. Vanga and Gasi were even less important as centers of slavery. Not only were exports smaller, but there were only 2,153 slaves in the area in 1897.¹³

On the larger plantations – if the estate of Suleiman bin Abdallah of Malindi can be taken as representative – slaves worked in gangs of five to twenty under a headman who was also a slave.¹⁴ The hours of work ranged from 8.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. during slack periods in the dry season and from sunrise to late afternoon during planting and harvesting, although the average workweek on the master's fields there and elsewhere usually did not exceed forty to fifty hours per week even during peak periods of the agricultural season. On the estates, slaves had Fridays off during the rainy season and Thursdays as well during the dry season. Each slave received a daily grain ration while working for the master, but slaves also were given their own plots to grow additional food for themselves. The men were assigned a fixed piece of land to work during clearing and weeding. Women took produce to market, scared birds away from the fields, and prepared food. Unlike the men, they did not have free days.

The Muslim push into the interior of East Africa involved a combination of “legitimate” trade, slave raiding, and political consolidation. The first Arab merchants reached the commercial center at Tabora, halfway between the coast and Lake Tanganyika, in the 1830s, and thereafter the Muslim presence in the interior grew at a phenomenal rate. Muslims, including Arabs, Swahili, and converts among the Nyamwezi and Yao, dominated a vast network of trade routes that stretched beyond the lake country to the basin of the Congo River by the 1870s.¹⁵ Arabs were operating at Ujiji, the main port on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, in 1840. They moved across the lake and, under the leadership of the colourful Tippu Tip, occupied territory along the upper Congo (Lualaba). Tabora, Ujiji, Kirando, Kasongo, Riba-Riba, and Mtaka were some of the towns that dotted the trade routes over which copper from Katanga, salt from Ivuna, Uvinza, and elsewhere, textiles and other imports from the coast, and other goods moved. The Muslims were after slaves and ivory, particularly the latter, which constituted the most valuable export from East Africa. Few slaves reached the coast through Nyamwezi country; they were incorporated into the local economy and society instead.

In the internal sector, many slaves were needed at the commercial centers, particularly on plantations that supplied the caravan trade with provisions. Given that porters were the principal means of transporting cargo, it was necessary

to acquire food at staging points along the caravan trails. Plantation output provided much of this market at the major centers. At Ujiji, for example, slaves constituted the great majority of the local population by the 1880s. The model for Ujiji society was fashioned after the Swahili-Arab coast. Tippu Tip followed in his father's steps as a trader in the interior, investing in plantations both on Zanzibar and in the interior.¹⁶ Along the river, north of Kasongo, Tippu Tip established at least twenty plantations in the early 1880s, thus assuring adequate food supplies for the riverine trade. At Kasongo, on the Lualaba River west of Lake Tanganyika, slaves assembled at the sound of a gong and marched together to the fields, where they worked in gangs.¹⁷ Slaves were found not only on plantations, but also in the harems of wealthy merchants and among the domestic staff of commercial establishments. Some dependants of the merchants and other petty traders were themselves descendants of slaves or had purchased their own freedom. These were known as Ngwana, and they often traded along the less frequented routes, handling small quantities of goods that they bulked for the bigger firms.

The Southeastern Coast and the Lake Malawi Corridor

The Muslim network extended down the East African coast, where it overlapped with a rival Afro-Portuguese network. Both networks pursued the slave trade, branched into the ivory trade, and invested in slave labor. Like elsewhere, slave owners shifted to the production of "legitimate" goods when market demand made it profitable to do so, but they continued to export slaves as long as possible. Kilwa, for example, was the main port for the shipment of slaves to the plantation areas of the northern coast, as well as a supply area for more distant places. Even when British intervention made shipping difficult, the merchants at Kilwa still exported slaves, only now the slaves were sent overland.¹⁸ The other Muslim towns to the south – Angoche, Sancul, and Kitangonya – served the important function of smuggling centers once British pressure on the Portuguese closed the Mozambique Island and Quelimane to the slavers.¹⁹ Despite competition between the Muslim and Afro-Portuguese networks that sporadically flared into violence, the two networks were part of the same expansion of slavery.

The Swahili communities began to produce goods for export by mid-century. At Kilwa, slaves gathered gum copra, rubber, and sesame seeds, and they grew grain for export too. The production and collection of "legitimate" goods encouraged the immigration of Indian merchants. There were 87 in 1873; by 1886, the number had risen to 242. Sugarcane and rice were the staple crops in the Pangani valley; gum was common at Lindi, and copra also came from Dar es Salaam.²⁰

The Afro-Portuguese communities experienced similar development. At Ibo, slaves were also used to separate the tiny sesame seeds for export. In 1880, the estates near Ibo ranged in size from 120 to 1,200 hectares, each employing

20 to 50 slaves. By the end of the century, there were also 6 to 10 coffee plantations.²¹ At the Mozambique Island, more than half the population was slave (total population: 5,800) in 1875, whereas in the mainland district across from the island, there were 12,000 slaves registered with the government at the time Portugal officially “freed” slaves in 1875. Another 9,000 slaves were registered at Quelimane, although at both places there were many masters who did not bother to declare their slave holdings or who did not declare all their slaves. Further down the coast, Inhambane had 3,116 slaves in 1861, whereas Lourenço Marques had 276 in the same year.²²

The Portuguese community comprised a mixed population of Goans, Portuguese, and mulattos, who were primarily involved in the sale of slaves under various guises and other commodities grown along the coast and in the immediate interior. Even in the 1850s, the Portuguese armed forces at Mozambique Island relied on slave levies, and local officials often had large holdings of slaves. Candido da Costa Soares, for example, was one such official; he and others like him owned as many as 200 slaves.²³ Like their Swahili counterparts at Sancul, Kitangonya, and Angoche, they became involved in the production of “legitimate” goods as the market for oil seed, grain, and other goods became important in the 1860s and 1870s. Frederic Elton, the British consul at Mozambique in 1875, provided an eyewitness account of the importance of slavery at the Mozambique Island, the year Portugal nominally freed slaves by decreeing that henceforth slaves would be *libertos*:

All the owners of property on the mainland hold *libertos* and slaves. Slave discipline is still carried on. Slave punishments are not discontinued, such as working with a heavy log attached to the leg by a chain. Slaves are let out to work for hire – are lent to foreign commercial houses for consideration and whether termed *libertos* or slaves fall under the English interpretation of the word slave. For in the case of the *liberto* the equivalent of his labour is never received by him – he is not in the position of a man engaged for a term for certain work. He can be put to work for any person whom his master chooses to hire him, on the terms his master chooses to agree to.²⁴

Elsewhere in the Portuguese domain, slaves continued to be as important as they were at Mozambique and Quelimane. The *prazos* in the interior still organized large slave armies of *achikunda*, who terrorized peasants into supplying produce, and these armies seized slaves for the export trade that flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1806, the *prazo*-holders owned some 20,000 slaves on their Zambezi estates, but most of these were soldiers and their families. *Achikunda* were now employed in caravan trading and elephant hunting, which were natural extensions of their warrior functions from the previous century. They journeyed far into the interior in search of ivory, which they purchased or hunted. Because of the journeys they became virtually autonomous. Portuguese estate holders had to secure the permission of the “slave” leaders before punishing or selling individuals; it is perhaps at this time that destitute men in search of a protector voluntarily enslaved themselves.²⁵

The conditions of servitude were hardly onerous, and the opportunities for adventure and commercial success were relatively great. Increasing numbers of *achikunda* severed their ties with the *prazos*, establishing their independence as hunters and traders.

This steady dispersion of *achikunda* was part of a larger transformation in the Zambezi basin. *Prazo*-holders were able to replenish their warrior bands without much difficulty, at least until the 1820s; the export trade in ivory and slaves was sufficiently rewarding for the *prazo*-holders to abuse the free commoners on their estates, extracting agricultural surplus and even enslaving people for export. In the early 1820s, famine and drought hit many parts of the Zambezi valley; between 1826 and 1830, contenders for the Barue throne devastated a number of *prazos*, and in the 1830s, the *difecane* struck the Zambezi valley. Nguni invaders effectively established control over most of the lower Zambezi by 1840. The consequence of these disasters was that *achikunda* fled the region in greater numbers, taking with them a commitment to slavery. Some successfully established bases further up the Zambezi; others traveled into the area west of Lake Malawi; still others went further inland.²⁶

Along the Zambezi itself, this population displacement eventually made it possible to reorganize production in scattered locations so that slavery became even more important than it had been. Some slaves were still employed in gold prospecting, as they had been in the eighteenth century and earlier. In 1831, for example, the Italian agent Gamitto observed how slaves were organized by the *prazos* to exploit the gold deposits of the Zambezi valley:

The slaves employed at the mine are divided into *Insakas* as usual, but each of these has six negresses, it being ... only women who mine. Each *Insaka* is under the charge of a *Nyakoda* who gives a weekly account of the work of her people. These weeks are of four days, and each woman has to account for six *tangas* a week; this satisfied, the rest is hers. It often happens that a woman gets enough on the first day to pay the quota and in this case she is not required to turn up on the following days. Owners of the *Bares* mines usually have imported cloths, beads, etc., [sent to] them to sell to their slaves at exorbitant prices; and so these slaves buy from any passing merchant, secretly, what they need.²⁷

Gamitto reports a sexual division of labor that may have operated in some places. More often, however, men were employed in the mines too.

By the end of the century, slave-based agriculture became more common along the Zambezi, just as it was expanding along the coast. Portuguese farmers – often mulattos – relied on slave labor at many places along the river. Sir John Willoughby visited one master, Araujo Lobo, who had an estate at Matakania, 25 km below Zumbo. Willoughby's description of working conditions demonstrates that Araujo Lobo, at least, worked his slaves hard:

[T]wo gangs of slaves, each consisting of a dozen women, mostly with little children on their backs, and all chained together by means of heavy lengths of chain attached to iron rings around their necks ... were being employed in portorage between the

stockades and the river. ... They were the result of Araujo Lobo's latest raid up the Zambezi for men and women.²⁸

Women were particularly valued in the regional trade of the Zambezi valley, as Willoughby's observations make clear. *Achikunda* and other merchants bought slaves in the lower Zambezi, took them inland to sell for ivory, and then sold the ivory for export. Some Tonga in the Gwembe valley of the Zambezi are remembered as especially large slave owners, buying women and girls who could be attached to their lineages without the usual reciprocal exchanges involved.²⁹ There is no question that one dimension of owning large numbers of women involved their economic exploitation. The mulatto *prazero* Araujo Lobo was probably not much different in his actions from the Tonga masters of the Gwembe valley.

Along the Shire valley between the Zambezi and Lake Malawi, a similar concentration of slaves took place. Yao, *achikunda*, and others settled slaves in villages to grow crops. The Kololo porters in David Livingstone's antislavery expedition even participated in these developments in the 1880s. Once these Kololo left Livingstone's service, they defeated some local *achikunda* and established themselves as overlords of the Manganja. Captives were set to work in large fields to grow sesame; the seeds were exported to the coast. Yao, Swahili, and other merchants had similar slave villages further north, as the area that had been the great slaving ground for the export trade from south-eastern Africa in the early nineteenth century was transformed into a center of slave-based production. Only high transport costs limited the consolidation of a plantation economy.³⁰

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the Yao were centered in the area east of Lake Malawi, where successful merchant-princes began to consolidate territorial rule on the basis of clientage and slavery. To achieve political power, a Yao merchant had to convert wealth into a personal following. In part this was done by purchasing slaves from the proceeds of ivory sales, the manufacture of cloth, and other commerce; in part slaves were obtained in slave raids. Free people attached themselves to successful men to avoid raiding, both from Yao strongmen and from bands of the *difcane* that plagued the whole area. By the last few decades of the century, there were at least nine Yao strongmen; one of the most powerful, Mataka I Nyambi (who died in the late 1870s), reportedly had 600 wives scattered in eight villages. A third were housed in his capital at Mwembe, where there was also a substantial free population in addition to his slave women and male slaves, whose numbers are unknown. When Mataka Nyambi died, thirty boys and thirty girls were killed at his funeral.³¹

The Portuguese Enclaves in West-Central Africa

The transfer of plantation agriculture to west-central Africa was different from the development of plantations in the Indian Ocean basin. The Portuguese began to discuss the necessity of adjusting to the inevitable collapse of the

trans-Atlantic trade even before that trade actually declined. As Lopes de Lima argued in the early 1840s, slave-based agriculture should be promoted in Angola:

Slavery today is general there [in Angola] in the amount of 12 to 40 per cent among permanent settlers; but the number of slaves will rise as soon as the inhabitants of our cities and *presídios* decide to establish and cultivate lands which can rival those of Brazil ... and when the allied *sovas* [native chiefs] in the interior are convinced that they cannot sell their vassals and prisoners to a foreign country, and who decide that it is better to employ them in extracting profit from their own lands by sending colonial products to markets.³²

In 1850, there were 6,020 slaves in Luanda alone, out of a total population of 12,565; by 1854, there were 26,000 slaves registered in the whole of the Portuguese colony of Angola.³³ The size of this population was relatively stable throughout the first half of the century. Despite Lopes de Lima's prediction, therefore, a boom in agricultural production had not taken place by the middle of the century, although there was a sizeable slave population.

São Tomé and Príncipe were revitalized in the 1850s, precisely at the time when the export trade from west-central Africa began its final decline. As was the case in the Mascarenes, sugarcane was the main crop, and contract labor was substituted for slavery, even though this substitution did not affect the process of enslavement and slave trading in Africa and hardly affected the nature of servile relationships on São Tomé and Príncipe. Coffee soon replaced sugarcane as the principal crop; then, in the 1880s, cocoa began to replace coffee.³⁴

A small plantation sector in coffee and, to a lesser extent, sugarcane developed in west-central Africa. Near Ambaca, for example, a group of slave owners of mixed Portuguese and African origins, known as *Ambakistas*, developed their commercial and plantation interests; the *Ambakistas* were more or less Portuguese in dress, religion, and manners, but like the mulattos of southeastern Africa, they represented a mixture of cultures.³⁵ The same was true in the Cazengo district along the Kwanza River inland from Luanda. The first plantation was established in the 1830s. A Brazilian immigrant bought twenty-five slaves at the Dondo market for use on his farm. By 1850, local African farmers and European settlers were collecting coffee in the forest and planting trees. In 1870, several large-scale European plantations were using slave labor. Within a decade, much of the fertile land along the river had fallen into the hands of white owners. Nonetheless, the plantation sector in Cazengo remained relatively modest; there were never more than a few plantations until the 1870s and 1880s, and even at the peak of development in the 1890s, there were only 28 coffee plantations with a total slave population of 3,798.³⁶

To the south, another small plantation colony was established at Moçamedes in the 1840s, with sugarcane as the main crop. Cotton was tried in the 1860s and 1870s, when American production was low, and this was the period of Moçamedes' greatest prosperity. The growth of the colony was limited by

the environment, however. The area included only four coastal oases and one inland oasis at the foot of the escarpment, and cultivation depended on irrigation. The slaves, who numbered between 2,000 and 4,000, worked from sunrise to sunset, with a two hour break in the middle of the day and Sundays off. Men and women performed the same tasks, working in teams under overseers and drivers who were usually slaves themselves. At Moçamedes, slaves were also used in the fishing industry. Fishermen arrived in the 1860s, and they quickly bought slaves, who did most of the manual labor. Men crewed the ships; women dried and salted fish. Some planters produced foodstuffs for the industry, which by the 1890s was the most important part of the local economy. Fish were exported to São Tomé and Príncipe, among other places.³⁷

Apprenticeship in South Africa

The most significant development in South Africa was that the expansion of slavery in the enclaves associated with the movement of the Afrikaner population into the interior. The Dutch community accepted British rule begrudgingly at the best of times, but in the 1830s, the Boer trek onto the high veld marked a new era of resistance. In part this expansion was related to the slavery issue, for Dutch society was based on slavery and the exploitation of the nonwhite population. British abolitionist sentiments only fueled discontent that was already strong for other reasons. It is no coincidence that the great trek began just as the emancipation of slaves in British colonies was to take effect.

In 1807, there were 1,134 free blacks and 30,000 slaves in the Cape colony, which demonstrates the importance of slavery to this European community of 25,000 whites.³⁸ The agricultural economy – particularly wine and wheat – continued to depend on the labor of slaves, just as it had in the eighteenth century. The port at Cape Town relied on slave workers who performed menial tasks in the commercial firms and small shops of the town. But the institution of slavery underwent a fundamental change in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.³⁹ The campaign against the slave trade and slavery in Great Britain had repercussions in Cape society. When the trade was abolished, the import of slaves into Cape Town virtually ceased. From then on it was possible to obtain relatively few new slaves; they came primarily from skirmishes on the frontier in which captives were taken, but also through intermittent and relatively small-scale trade with African traders across the frontier. As in other slave societies, the slave population at the Cape was not demographically self-sustaining; consequently, the termination of arrivals from overseas and the inability of the interior to compensate for the import trade meant that the relative importance of slavery would inevitably decline.⁴⁰

Indications of change were first evident in Cape Town; some slave owners there sold some of their slaves to farmers in the interior, because the collapse of the slave market drove up prices, so that individual owners found it profitable to sell their slaves at the inflated prices. This shift was reflected in the

proportion of slaves in the population of the colony; whereas there were still 32,046 slaves in 1817, they no longer formed the majority of the population in Cape Town and gradually they declined as a percentage of the population of the colony as a whole.⁴¹

Because slavery could no longer satisfy the labor requirements of the colony, reforms were instituted between 1812 and 1828 that were designed to produce alternative sources of labor. The principal source was the Khoikhoi and San population – identified as coloreds – of whom there were 17,000 people in the colony by 1817. Khoikhoi and San were already an important component of the rural labor force, particularly in areas of livestock production. San and Khoikhoi children were incorporated into the workforce through a system of apprenticeship, which lasted until they were twenty-five. These children and young adults could not be sold and were technically free, but they received no wages for their labor, and once they reached “maturity” they were supposed to be paid and could even seek alternative employment, although in fact it was difficult to do so. Furthermore, adults were required to have passes that allowed them to be employed for specific periods: passes were instituted in reaction to uprisings among the Khoikhoi and their alliance with Xhosa and others outside the colony.⁴²

The pass system of contract labor, which underwent many modifications after it was introduced in 1809, laid the foundation for alternative supplies of labor, but it took several decades for migrant, contract labor to fill the needs of the expanding South African colony. Between 1809 and 1834, the pressures of an insufficient labor supply, the disappearance of land that could be developed, and friction with both the British government and African people on the frontier of Boer settlement created a situation that was potentially explosive. As the economy expanded – the major development involved the growth of wool production – Boers felt that their interests were not protected sufficiently to warrant their loyalty to the British regime; indeed, many Boers were ready to move beyond the frontier and seize new territory. Cattle and sheep required extensive land, and although slaves and Khoikhoi were available, the frontier seemed to offer better opportunities. First, some slaves were obtainable through raids and purchase, although the government tried to suppress slave raiding and trade. As late as 1828, the five eastern districts reported 6,598 slaves, in a slave population for the colony as a whole of 32,243.⁴³ Even though the number of slaves had remained relatively constant since the early years of the century, these figures suggest that the proportion owned in the eastern areas – from where many of the Voortrekkers came – had increased, reaching about 20 percent of the slave population.

The beginning of the Great Trek coincided with the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire, and the two were hardly unrelated. Between 1834 and 1838, slaves were considered to be apprentices; in effect, the British government attempted to impose a new labor regime, derived from the experience of Khoikhoi and San apprenticeship, on the white settlers. In the long run, the

emancipation of slaves and the further consolidation of the apprentice system were important steps toward the evolution of a migrant labor force, based on the issuance of passes to control settlement and employment. In the short run, however, many Boers took their slaves and Khoikhoi apprentices and moved inland to seize land for livestock and agriculture, for the devastation of the *difecane* wars had left the best land for settlement.⁴⁴ Beyond the British colony, the apprenticeship system functioned as a thinly disguised form of slavery. The Boers who had left by 1837 took with them perhaps 4,000 apprentices and supposedly former slaves who continued to be treated as servile. The Trekkers also continued to seize children or buy them for the rest of the century; the Nguni at Delagoa Bay became one source of “apprentices,” who were slaves in the eyes of the Nguni. As late as the 1890s, this modified form of slavery continued in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and Natal, although by then free migrant labor was more important as a source of manpower than slavery.⁴⁵

Expansion of an Indigenous Slave Mode of Production

The developments in the external enclaves had important repercussions in some parts of the interior. Merchants and warlords associated with the trade to the coast were able to take advantage of the foreign market for “legitimate” goods and the continued demand for slave labor. Except for ivory and rubber (late in the century), transport costs were usually too high for the successful development of agriculture, except to support the major corridors of trade. Hence along the Zambezi and such tributaries as the Shire, or overland to Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi, Swahili, Nyamwezi, Yao, and other slave owners created a locally important plantation sector. In west-central Africa, by contrast, the Cokwe and Bobangi, among others, amassed large numbers of slaves who invariably were used in production too, but the cultural and economic links with the coast and the external enclaves were not as pronounced as in East Africa, where the Muslim and Afro-Portuguese penetration of the interior left identifiable traces. On Madagascar, the rise of the Merina state was associated with a similar intensification of slavery: The link with foreign enclaves – the French and British investment in the Mascarenes and Comoros – possibly provided an incentive to use slave labor on a massive scale, but the productive employment of slaves soon became significant in its own right and without much connection to the external enclaves. Finally, there were isolated places – the Zambezi flood plains of the Lozi and the equatorial basin of the Congo – where slavery increased in scale, although the links with the external world were either marginal or not important at all. These cases indicate that economic and political conditions in central Africa could involve the transition to a slave mode of production based on indigenous developments.

The Cokwe were farmers and hunters in the interior of Angola. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Cokwe were only marginally involved in the commercial patterns of the region; but, as the demand for ivory, beeswax,

and rubber affected the area, their skills and location put them in a favorable position. By the 1850s, they were exporting these “legitimate” commodities. They were also enslaving many people, particularly women and children, whom they incorporated into their villages, even founding whole villages with such captives.⁴⁶ Cokwe elephant hunters acquired as many wives and small children as they could to swell their households. They bought slaves, participated as mercenaries in raiding expeditions, and extended loans in return for pawns, who were often treated as slaves. Here was a means of shifting population from those who were weak militarily to those who were strong, from those who were suffering from famine to those who had sufficient food, and from those who wanted capital and had only their kin and slaves as security for a loan to those who could supply the loan. Early-twentieth-century reports indicated that 80 percent of the women in Cokwe villages were “slaves,” a term used by A. A. Mendes Correa in 1916 to include captives, women purchased as slaves, and pawns.⁴⁷

Slave and pawn women who formed the bulk of the servile population were treated similarly. Once they were acquired, they became wives in one of the polygamous households in a small village that had as its core a number of men who were related through the maternal line. When the Cokwe men were hunting for elephants, engaging as mercenaries in the internal conflicts of neighboring states, or collecting beeswax or rubber for export to the coast, the women stayed in the villages and farmed. Kinship lost its significance, as children, regardless of their mother’s status as slave or pawn, were full members of their father’s lineage. For women and children who entered Cokwe society as slaves or pawns, therefore, emancipation was virtually guaranteed upon marriage, and it was fully assured for the second generation. The status of slave was effectively confined to those individuals who were born outside Cokwe society. Slavery was an institution that was tied to enslavement in war, raids, kidnapping, judicial punishment, and debt. The Cokwe claimed that they never sold their own slaves or pawns; hence slavery here was seen as a means of augmenting the number of dependents and not as a source of wealth through the slave trade.

The division of labor in Cokwe villages reveals the essentially integrative features of slavery as a method of recruiting women without confining them to an inferior social category that is usually associated with slavery. The men cleared the land for planting, but otherwise agricultural work was done by women. The men, forming small hunting or raiding parties, then left the villages for long periods. In this situation, dissatisfied slaves could flee, but there was no class of slaves. Slavery and pawnship among the Cokwe related more to a division of labor based on sex than to a class structure based on slave and free.

Modifications in the general pattern of slavery also occurred along the trade routes elsewhere, from Benguela in the south to the Loango coast and the Congo River basin. Ivory, wax, cotton, coffee, and rubber became important

activities after 1850. The population expansion in Caconda after 1850 was linked to the establishment of plantations along the coast. The commercial network in the north included Tio and Bobangi. The Tio kingdom, which controlled the area near Malebo Pool, had a number of important market towns. In 1852, Mswata on the Congo River contained 8 or 9 free men, 85 wives of the chief Ngobila, and more than 190 slaves. The largest merchants and chiefs in Ntamo had hundreds of slaves and perhaps twenty or more wives. The slaves acted as retainers and manned the caravans to the coast. The women were often related to other chiefs and helped consolidate political and commercial alliances.⁴⁸ The concentration of slaves indicates that slavery in Tio society was an essential element in the economic and social differentiation of a prosperous group of merchant-princes. This pattern was essentially the same one that had prevailed throughout the history of the area's involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as the discussion of the coastal Vili reveals. The transformation of slavery into a productive institution was only partially achieved along the trade routes. In general, slavery remained a factor in social and political consolidation but only marginally became a factor in production.

The Bobangi of the Congo River followed a similar pattern, although slavery became more basic to social organization and the domination of river traffic.⁴⁹ Slave women became wives and farmers, whereas slave men became canoe men and commercial agents, with the opportunity for promotion, *de facto* emancipation, and full access to the upper sections of Bobangi society. Slave men could even establish independent commercial firms. By the late nineteenth century, Bobangi society was essentially a loose federation of competing trading firms. Relations between master and slave had become the common form of interaction, not kinship. Merchants amassed large numbers of slaves, who lived in a separate ward with their master. Slaves formed the bulk of the population. At one settlement, at the end of the nineteenth century, there were 290 slaves and only 8 free men – a pattern common at all the Bobangi towns. Male slaves paddled canoes and otherwise performed manual labor, whereas female slaves did most of the agricultural work, thereby providing food for the firms.

The first years of enslavement were the most dangerous for a slave. The death of an important person resulted in the sacrifice of up to eight slaves. Slaves were also killed to seal pacts between chiefs, such as price fixing and market agreements, and sometimes just to remind slaves of their position. Masters substituted slaves in compulsory poison ordeals related to witchcraft accusations. Guilty people died during the ordeal; innocent people vomited the poison. Nonetheless, despite these risks, individual slaves could become important and occasionally were allowed to split off from the main firm to found a separate ward. When the master died, the firm did not necessarily pass to a son but rather to the most successful merchant, unless the firm was divided into several segments. Hence the two main features of Bobangi society were the acquisition of large numbers of slaves and the emergence of a few talented subordinates, often slaves themselves, who founded their own firms. Still

slavery was only partially associated with production. Slaves were the main fieldworkers in growing cassava and other crops, but these functions remained subordinate to commerce. The structure of society relied on slavery, especially because Bobangi society was only self-sustaining demographically through the acquisition of new slaves. Here slavery was transformed more fully than in most parts of the interior, but its productive potential was only partially realized in the sense that the focus of the economy remained centered on trade.

Elsewhere in the equatorial basin of the Congo River, other slave owners began to acquire slaves for the purpose of agricultural labor. The people in the region of the upper Ngiri and Moeko employed slaves to cultivate fields that had been constructed in the swamps. Manioc was grown in the Alima region, sugarcane in the area of Lukenye and Lake Mai Ndombe, and vegetable salts were made elsewhere. Some Bapoto masters on the river around Lisala had as many as 100 slaves each. Slaves lived on islands in the river where they gathered palm kernels and made palm oil. The owners visited these islands to bring food and collect the palm produce. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, slaves were used to cultivate the fields along the river at Wangata, Ilebo, Lokolela, and Bulobo.⁵⁰

Another relatively isolated transformation occurred in the interior flood plains of the Zambezi valley, where the Lozi state was divided into a landlord class, an exploited peasantry, and a large number of slaves.⁵¹ Many tens of thousands of people lived in the flood plains, with estimates for the number of slaves ranging between a quarter and significantly more than half of the population. The peasantry was obliged to render *corvée* labor and pay taxes and rent. Because the peasantry was usually related to the dominant class through ties of kinship and ethnicity, traditional claims could be invoked that provided some protection from extreme exploitation. The brunt of oppression fell on the slaves, who probably constituted a majority of the population as early as the 1880s, and perhaps earlier still.

These slaves farmed, herded livestock, repaired and constructed houses, fetched wood and water, and performed a host of other menial tasks in the Lozi economy. The best lands in the plains were reserved for the masters, and these had to be tended before the small plots relegated for the use of slaves could be worked. Furthermore, slave gardens were most apt to be on poorer soil or lower lands that tended to be flooded first. Slaves were also expected to pay a portion of the produce from their own plots, which amounted to a rent on the land. There were many other restrictions for slaves. They could not eat millet or sorghum, nor use wood and mud for their huts, nor wear certain clothes or jewelry. In addition, slaves had to perform the most labor-intensive *corvée* projects for the state, including the construction and repair of irrigation ditches, settlement mounds, and royal buildings. They also had to cultivate various royal fields, supply government officials with provisions whenever they were on state visits, and furnish slave children to the state as a form of tribute.

The type of exploitation that characterized Lozi was also found to a lesser extent elsewhere in central Africa, particularly in Lunda and Kazembe. The capital districts depended on slave labor not unlike that in Lozi, though there was no dependence on irrigation and royal projects. Slaves, particularly women, were the main workers in the countryside.⁵² The population of the capital districts usually numbered several thousand people, and the impression of various nineteenth-century observers was that a significant proportion was slave.

As in Lozi, slavery had been transformed into a means of political domination. Despite the relatively weak market forces, slaves could be used in an economic sense to buttress state power. Both slaves and free peasants paid tribute, but neither produced for market exchange on a significant level. In the early nineteenth century, Lunda and Kazembe still supplied the external slave trade, but when that trade declined, the state faced serious problems of adjustment. The aristocracy fought over access to increasingly scarce resources. Civil war and Cokwe incursions led to political disintegration and the decline of state slavery.

The expansion of slavery in Madagascar was related to the political expansion of Imerina, which conquered most of Madagascar in the course of the nineteenth century.⁵³ Imerina had been one of the major sources of slaves for the Mascarenes in the late eighteenth century, but foreign trade was only one dimension of Imerina's success. The monarchy organized huge irrigation projects around the capital of Tananarive. Marshes were drained and dykes constructed, and the land was turned into rice fields. In the late eighteenth century, work levies consisted of free men, but by the early nineteenth century, slave labor became the basis for the maintenance and extension of these public projects. Slaves also became increasingly important in farming the rice fields because free men had military duties that prevented their involvement in agriculture.⁵⁴

In 1817, King Radama of Imerina signed a treaty with Britain that allowed the interception of slave ships in exchange for an annual subsidy in the form of firearms. This gave Imerina a monopoly of firearms on Madagascar, which facilitated military expansion and the enslavement of people for use in the irrigation schemes of the capital district. Even though Radama had to sacrifice the income gained from exporting slaves, the political advantages gained from military supremacy proved to be considerable. By the middle of the century, the slave population had increased to the point where society was divided into two classes, slave and free. By the end of the century, considerably more than half of the population was slave. Slaves did virtually all productive activities: they were used in mining and smelting; they transported wood from the forests; and they were household servants and concubines. The monarchy had a large group of royal slaves to carry out public works, farm the royal fields, and maintain the palace. The slaves worked in gangs under overseers, and they lived in barracks. Strict endogamy was practiced to maintain the distinction

between slave and free: Marriage between a free man or woman and a slave reduced the status of the children to that of slave.⁵⁵

The Transformation of Lineage Slavery

Fundamentally, lineage slavery involved social reproduction. Actual practice varied. In some cases, slavery was a means of military recruitment; in others, slaves were valued more for their productive capacities; in others still, slaves were killed in symbolic demonstrations of social solidarity. The significant difference between these forms of slavery and the plantation slavery of the East African coast was that slaves were not primarily exploited for their potential as producers. Even when slaves performed economic functions – and slaves usually did – these were secondary to their subordinate position in a social unit. The limited extent of market development prevented the transformation of slavery into a productive system. Slave trading and enslavement continued in the interior. While slaves could be sold to places where labor was needed for production, the affected areas of this vast region remained part of an international system of slavery. Hence until mid-century, west-central and south-eastern Africa sent slaves to the Americas, and for this period slavery in the domestic sphere remained a dimension of a larger system. Once the export trade was cut off, and despite the resurgence of slave plantations on São Tomé – and, to a lesser extent, Príncipe and the Angolan coast – the foreign trade began to collapse after the 1850s. Then the system of slavery began to disintegrate. In contrast to the West African coast, the domestic economy did not experience the kind of transformation to “legitimate” trade that could result in the exploitation of slaves in a productive capacity. Consequently, slavery in many parts of the interior reinforced a social order based on dependency but not on the exploitation of slaves to produce commodities.

Among the Ila, for example, early-twentieth-century reports show that 40 percent of the population was of slave descent, which was as high a proportion of slaves as in many places where slaves were important in production. Nonetheless, the Ila had little that could be sold on the market; transport costs were too high for Ila slave owners to become involved in the export economy. Slavery was relatively benign and involved the assimilation of people to a great extent, even when their ancestry was remembered. Slavery was a means of augmenting lineage membership.⁵⁶ Kinship relationships were redefined to incorporate slaves, particularly women. Slavery broke the link of reciprocity that underlay the normal functioning of kinship, but it did not lead to exploitation as an institution. Instead, slavery remained embedded in social structures and was not transformed into a mode of production.

Throughout much of the interior, slavery continued to be firmly associated with a kinship framework, just as it was among the Ila.⁵⁷ Slaves were valuable because they had no kinship connections and could be incorporated despite customary norms. In many matrilineal communities, for example, slave

women and slave children could be married or “adopted” without acquiring the obligations that were connected with people who could turn to a lineage in times of trouble.⁵⁸ There were no labor demands from kin. There were no meddlesome relatives who might intervene in marital disputes or who might offer advice on child-rearing practices. Nor were there costly visits from family who would expect to be fed and entertained. In matrilineal societies in which brothers-in-law were a force to reckon with, it was often desirable for men to marry women who had no brothers. In this way, their children had no uncle from whom they inherited or to whom they could look for access to land and communal protection. A man’s children were his own if a slave woman bore them. It is no wonder, then, that women were “assimilated” and children were “adopted.”

On the surface, this system of slavery appears far from onerous. Because women, with the help from children, did most of the farming, there was little differentiation in agriculture between slave and free. In fact, marriage effectively emancipated slave women in matrilineal societies, and children also became free as they grew older. They were initiated into the customs and obligations of their master’s society in ways very similar to the biological children of their master. Hence slaves, especially those purchased or enslaved in their youth, often became full members of society with the passage of time.

Certainly there were societies in which slavery remained closely associated with marriage and kinship structures and was relatively mild. The Tawana, on the borders of the Kalahari Desert, had few slaves. The roots of slavery in the dependent relationships associated with kinship still could be found there, as A. Schulz observed in the 1890s: “When talking of slaves amongst natives, the term slaves does not bear the same import as to the European mind [The] position between master and slave is more one of relative domesticity than actual slavery.”⁵⁹ Here was a society relatively far from the main currents of change, only marginally affected by the wars of the *difcane*, beyond the activities of Portuguese and Muslim merchants and raiders, and only beginning to feel the presence of Europeans. The Tawana lived off a mixed economy of cattle herding and farming. There was certainly need for menial labor, but there was little domestic pressure to exploit slaves in a manner that had become common in many parts of the continent by this time.

The means of assimilating slave women into the family among the Kongo in the late nineteenth century are characteristic of many situations in which slaves were “incorporated” into kinship groups. As Weeks makes clear, the terminology of kinship was adapted to allow slaves to be perceived in a manner that was meant to be more legitimate, but full integration could only be achieved through a collective failure in memory of slave origins or a significant blurring of slave ancestry through complicated intermarriage and descent:

The children born of family slaves are frequently called grandchildren (*ntekolo*); and when one of these “grandchildren” is given as a wife in exchange for a female member

of the family, a present is given with her to “wash her blood” (*nsukula menga*), and thus remove the slave element, that she may be treated as a proper wife, and not as a slave. Her children will belong to the family of her owners, but will be called *ana akwa Kinkenge* – children born of a freed woman of the Kinkenge clan, and not *esi Kinkenge* – clansmen.⁶⁰

This process of emancipation occurred over three generations for female slaves in this matrilineal society. The family slaves that Weeks refers to were at least the first generation born into slavery, and hence their children were in fact the grandchildren of newly acquired slaves and fully acculturated to Kongo society. Yet only through marriage and public ceremony could a female be granted the status of freedom in the context of the lineage, and even then her children were still recognized as different from full lineage members.

The Kongo society that Weeks observed was far different from the sixteenth-century Kongo Kingdom that the Portuguese had first encountered. Where once powerful warlords had amassed large slave establishments, there were only memories that whole villages were slave in origin. Portuguese missionaries had also acquired slaves in those early centuries, and villages descended from these slaves could still be identified at the time Weeks was in Kongo. In both cases, the memory of slave ancestry is a striking testimony to the failure of Kongo society to incorporate slaves fully into the lineages, despite the persistence of a myth that slaves could be assimilated. Even when economic realities eliminated any significant distinction between free peasants and those tainted with a distant slave origin, the heritage of slavery still cast its shadow over Kongo society, revealing ample evidence of the long and tragic history of slavery here. The most onerous tasks were reserved for newly purchased individuals, not those born into the household. Slaves were still subject to death at funerals, and slavery was still the penalty for sorcery, crime, and sometimes debt. No system of plantation agriculture or military conscription through slavery operated in Kongo in the nineteenth century, however; slavery remained a key institution in this poor society, although only incidental to production. Those people of slave ancestry in the second and third generations faced the risk that their “lineage,” on whose sufferance they obtained land and the right to take part in community affairs, might find itself in debt or in a difficult political or legal situation. These were the conditions in which pawns and slaves were needed, and slave ancestry meant that unless a more likely candidate was available, second- or third-generation slaves were sold or otherwise transferred, with a corresponding fall in status. Free members of a lineage could be pawned or sold, but usually this happened only in the case of suspected sorcery, crime, or physical or mental disability. There were also cases of men pawning or selling free children and other relatives, even when slaves were available, but this was done to protect personal wealth at the expense of the lineage.

Although slavery was a means of bypassing kinship in a social framework that emphasized the rights and obligations of lineage membership, the actual pressures of the economy and political institutions often undermined

this theoretical model. People knew how society was supposed to function with respect to land, labor, marriage, religious ceremonies, and the reciprocal exchange of goods between kin. Customary law provided a means of settling a wide variety of problems and of preventing an equally diverse range of potential disputes. People who had military or financial means often twisted custom, and over the course of time they effectively changed legal traditions. Thus, people were supposed to operate on the basis of kinship, but those who could acquired slaves and pawns. In terms of the model of society that prevailed in the nineteenth century, customary law determined how the rules of kinship were adjusted to make allowance for pawns and slaves. The manipulation of legal traditions could work both ways, and often slaves were able to gain full lineage rights. The struggle in these societies was between those who acquired slaves and pawns in such numbers that customary law regarding kinship could not function smoothly and those servile people who did not have rights under traditional laws to establish a claim to lineage affiliation. Free children could be pawned or even sold as well. Kinship relationships remained the model for how society should function, but individuals caught in the web of slavery or pawnship were not fooled by a theoretical construct. They had to live in the real world.

The various *dificane* groups sustained the myth that society was based on kinship structures, but the reality was that many people were incorporated as slaves. Whether it was through military conscription or polygamy, large numbers of slaves found themselves in dependent relationships that had little to do with real kinship ties. The language of social intercourse was often based on kinship terms, however. Slaves called their master “father,” and the legal rights of slaves were often compared with those of other dependents, particularly children. One can say that the dominant ideology was based on this model of social organization. Such small groups of warriors as the 300 followers of Zwide captured youths for the military and women for the soldiers. As they swept north from southern Africa, they integrated captives through artificial kinship structures. The social myth disguised the violent exploitation inherent in the marauding army. Captives had no freedom. Their choice was to conform to the regimentation of the band or face punishment, death, or sale. Through this technique of expansion, Zwide could transform a force of 300 men into a new society, many thousands strong, and splinter groups founded new societies of their own.⁶¹

Slavery in this setting was a means of recruitment that carried with it automatic emancipation through incorporation. The exploitation in this system rested on the initial act of enslavement and the indoctrination that was required before integration was recognized. As an army on the prowl, the *dificane* bands were similar to the Cokwe, *ruga ruga*, and other warriors, such as those formed in the Benguela highlands in the second half of the nineteenth century, although their military technology differed. The ratios of slave to free were extremely high among these groups, except that the adoption of new

cultures and languages was relatively easy, and hence slaves ceased to be slaves in reality. Three hundred men could not maintain a separate culture unless there was a rigorous form of indoctrination of captives. People were forcibly removed from other societies and incorporated into a new social order that had to allow for social mobility and effective emancipation. The survival of these groups depended on finding women. They depopulated whole regions – selling new captives when necessary but incorporating many others – in the search for new homes. The *difecane* was truly the “crushing”; cattle were stolen to replenish the herds that had been lost in migration, and food was taken wherever it was found. Enslavement was a logical part of a movement based on looting.

In core areas of the *difecane* – Zululand, Swaziland, and the Gaza Kingdom inland from Delagoa Bay – slavery underwent a partial transformation that was not characteristic of the northern portions of the *difecane*. In the Gaza, Swazi, and Zulu Kingdoms, slaves were as numerous as in the northern bands, but the effort to assimilate slaves was overcome by the encroachment of the Boer economy. Slaves did not constitute a class, because the children of slave women were accepted as free with automatic rights to kinship status, and slave men were seldom allowed to marry, thereby limiting the number of children born of slave parents. As elsewhere, slaves were involved in agricultural labor and the herding of livestock. Fieldwork freed the wives of the elite from the normal responsibilities for women, who generally did most of the farming, and, because virtually all cattle belonged to the political elite, the employment of slaves in this sector was an important dimension of their economic position. Slavery reinforced the kinship system, allowing the Nguni and Swazi elites to maintain their political and economic power. By the 1870s, however, slaves became more important in production because they enabled the freeborn to seek employment as migrant workers in Kimberley and Natal. As the movement of migrants increased in the 1880s and 1890s, the importance of slavery in the domestic economies of Gaza, Zululand, and Swaziland appears to have increased too, but unlike in others places where a transformation to a slave mode of production occurred, slavery here facilitated the consolidation of capitalism by facilitating the evolution of a migrant-labor system. Slave production was not intended for the market; instead, slaves filled the subsistence needs of the domestic sector.⁶²

There were many places in central Africa where slavery was an important institution, but not in production. This is particularly clear where slaves were sacrificed at funerals or eaten by cannibals. Again the significance of these actions highlights social relationships. Among the Kuba of the Congo River basin, the proportion of slaves in society was only about 10 percent at the end of the nineteenth century, and yet Kuba had been a major market for slaves for several decades at least. Slaves were most heavily concentrated around the Kuba capital, but most households had one or two slaves at most, and many had none at all. The proportion of slaves in society remained small, despite continuous purchases, because a major function of slavery here was to provide

sacrificial victims for funerals.⁶³ In a metaphorical sense, these slaves were assimilated into Kuba society, but their incorporation was in the next world, not this one. A similar phenomenon, on the metaphorical level, prevailed in cannibal rituals, in which human beings were consumed as a means of strengthening the social organism. Such practices were common in the northern equatorial forest, particularly in the Ubangi River valley.⁶⁴ Once more, slavery was not transformed into a productive institution. Rather, the destruction of slaves was a type of exploitation that required a constant supply of slaves, but for purposes that helped consolidate social institutions that were not themselves based on the productivity of slavery.

When the developments in central, southern, and eastern Africa are compared with developments elsewhere, it is apparent that slavery sometimes became essential to production, but not everywhere. As has been shown earlier, slavery existed in a relatively mild form at the edge of the major political units and economic regions, and in these peripheral places slavery often allowed for incorporation on the basis of near equality. The striking feature of slavery in the northern savanna and along the West African coast was the division between the military and commercial sectors. This dichotomy was most fully developed for the Islamic areas, but it seems that a similar pattern prevailed along the coast as well. This split between a sector based on enslavement and a sector based on the use of slaves in production widened very rapidly in Bantu Africa during the nineteenth century. Moreover, enslavers and producers tended to be more separated geographically than was the case in the other regions. Elsewhere, slaves were concentrated at the centers of the states responsible for the acquisition of the greatest number of new captives. In central Africa, most productive activity was on the East African coast, along the trade routes that supplied the external trade, and in the European enclaves. The greater isolation of productive slavery from enslavement highlights the most impressive difference that distinguishes the region from the rest of the continent, which experienced more social and economic integration. Despite the tremendous increase in the numbers of slaves everywhere in the nineteenth century, slave raiding and war in central and eastern Africa caused more destruction, particularly considering that no new political order, comparable to the Islamic states of the northern savanna, emerged to offer the possibility of a new stability. People were transferred, as slaves, into productive activities in central Africa. It is unlikely that the resulting output approached the productive potential that could have been realized if people had been left alone, because of the extreme waste of the enslavement process. This scale of destruction brings into focus the overall negative effects of the long history of enslavement, the slave trade, and slavery on African society and economy.⁶⁵

The Abolitionist Impulse

The Reluctant Move Toward Abolition

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, the African social order was more firmly rooted in slavery than ever before. This meant that Africa and Europe were on a collision course in which slavery was a major issue, even if Europeans did not always recognize it as such.¹ The imperialist momentum thrust a new social and political system on Africa, in which there was no room for slavery. Even though the pressure for change came from without, African societies were far from passive participants. The internal dynamics of the political economy were closely associated with the transformation of slavery into a productive system, sometimes connected with the external market and sometimes part of regional developments. The transformation was far from uniform. In large parts of Bantu Africa, slavery was linked to the regeneration of social and political institutions, as before. But along the East African coast, in the northern savanna, and on parts of the West African coast, slavery had become essential to the organization of production, no matter what social and political roles were also satisfied through slave use.

The greater use of slaves, involving a transformation in the means of production, demonstrates an adjustment to the world economy of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, alternatives to slavery were not seriously considered until late in the century, and then primarily as a result of European pressures on the African political economy. The long history of slavery had established the flexibility of the institution in controlling people, organizing production, arranging marriages, and bypassing custom. As long as slaves were readily available, they could be used in every conceivable capacity. Only when the source of slaves and the means of distributing them within Africa were undermined did slavery cease to be a viable institution. From the middle of the nineteenth century, the European colonial role was to whittle away at the means of enslavement

and distribution. Despite a mythology of abolition, this role was not readily accepted. If there was a passive agent in the history of slavery during the nineteenth century, it was Europe, not Africa. Africa struggled to reform slavery in a changing context. The various European colonial powers did their best to avoid or circumscribe the commitment to abolition, reluctantly pursuing the fight whenever compromise proved impossible. Abolition was eventually achieved not so much because of the desire to end slavery but because the modern industrial system and a slave-based social formation were incompatible. In Marxist terms, the clash was based on the contradictions between different modes of production. The demise of slavery was inevitable in the context of absorption into a capitalist world economy.

European colonial regimes instituted conflicting policies that were, at best, confusing. European territory was free, so that fugitives should have been free once they entered a colony, but European administrations often returned fugitives to their masters. Furthermore, the British distinguished protectorates from colonies in terms of the legal status of slaves. In British colonies, slaves were technically free after 1834. In protectorates, British law did not apply, and slaves were not free, even though the slave trade was outlawed. Slaves seldom recognized these fine distinctions. Massive flights from slavery were clearly discouraged by the oscillation in European actions and policies, but slaves still saw European outposts as possible havens of freedom.

Some scholars have argued that African servility depended on attitudes quite unrelated to the concept of freedom. African thought, they claim, did not consider freedom a desirable or possible status.² There can be no mistake about this matter. The desertion of slaves throughout the nineteenth century, and especially at the end of the century when European conquest was well underway, demonstrates that many slaves knew exactly what they wanted, and it was not to “belong” to their master. They wanted to escape and they did so. In this sense they knew what freedom was. It is perhaps possible to quibble over definitions, but one point is clear: Slaves wanted a status other than that of slave. When they had the opportunity, many people took advantage of it to escape, despite the uncertainties of flight, given that European governments were only nominally committed to emancipation and abolition.

In seizing the initiative, the slaves themselves were largely responsible for changing the social and economic structures of Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only in a few places was slavery altered significantly before then. European laws and actions, often contradictory but nonetheless encouraging, provided the chance. Slaves ran away; they opened new lands for farms; they provided migrant labor for agriculture and mining; they served as hired porters before railways and roads could break the transportation bottleneck. The aim of slaves was freedom, not the modification of the conditions of slavery, and this often placed Europeans in the position of reforming the institution so that its demise would occur gradually and not in one, single revolutionary action. The colonial regimes became the defenders of slavery, albeit

reformed in many respects, and as a result, the greatest single impediment to full emancipation was colonialism.

Missionaries, reformers, and some business circles prompted the mystique that Africa would be uplifted by the three “Cs”: civilization, Christianity, and commerce. Commerce, as we have seen in previous chapters, had the opposite effect: It increased the number of slaves within Africa. The remaining Cs – civilization in the form of the European colonial conquest and Christianity through the actions of missionaries – had a more profound impact, although not always intended. European rhetoric pushed in the direction of abolition and emancipation; European experience encouraged complicity and often openly supported slavery on the pretext that “domestic slavery” was different from slavery elsewhere.

The Colonial Occupation of the Western Coast

Nowhere was this contradiction more apparent than along the West African coast, where the British, followed by other European countries, concentrated their early efforts in the abolition campaign. That campaign had several aspects. First, thousands of slaves were taken off European ships and set free in Sierra Leone, thereby establishing a policy of emancipating slaves. The total number of liberated slaves landed between 1810 and 1864 was about 160,000. Of these, the British accounted for 149,800; the United States and France were responsible for the rest.³ This presence of ex-slaves was a potentially corrosive influence on the institution of slavery in Africa.

Secondly, British policy and later that of the other colonial powers involved the negotiation of anti-slave-trading treaties with African governments, usually as part of more general commercial agreements. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, virtually all merchants and rulers along the West African coast had agreed to such provisions, sometimes under direct threat of military intervention, but often more willingly. These treaties abolished the export slave trade only and specifically exempted the domestic slave trade and slavery. The naval instructions of 1844 and 1866 recognized “the distinction between the export of slaves to which Great Britain is determined to put an end and the system of Domestic Slavery with which she claims no right to interfere.”⁴ Here was a major retreat in the struggle against slavery, for this distinction between the domestic trade and the external trade was premised on the ignorance of the European public, which knew nothing about African affairs other than the European dimension, if that. When Europeans began to report more fully on events in the interior, this permissive attitude toward the internal market was no longer politically acceptable, and a new policy, based on total abolition of slave trading, had to be adopted.

Thirdly, the establishment of freed-slave settlements, first in Sierra Leone and later in other places, was conceived within the same framework that distinguished between internal and external trade. The history of Freetown, the first

and most important settlement, provides a striking example of this contradiction. Despite its name, the settlement was a free town only for those slaves taken off European slave ships and others repatriated from the Americas. The laws abolishing slavery in British colonies were not applicable to the Protectorate of Sierra Leone, where slavery continued to flourish until very late. Slave dealing was not abolished until 1896, and slavery itself was outlawed only in 1926.⁵ Freetown, despite its name, was the capital of one of the last bastions of slavery. This scandalous situation could only prevail because of the myth that domestic slavery was different and therefore acceptable.

Sierra Leoneans had a far greater impact on other parts of West Africa, particularly the Bights of Benin and Biafra, than on the immediate interior of Freetown. Many ex-slaves returned to their home countries, often as Christian converts. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established itself in Freetown in 1804; the Wesleyan Missionary Society opened a mission in 1811. These missions were successful in converting a majority of freed slaves landed in Sierra Leone, so that when the ex-slaves began returning to their home countries, they spread ideas associated with Christianity. Between 1839 and 1842, 500 ex-slaves went back to Yorubaland, and thereafter the number increased. The returnees became merchants and farmers.⁶ A few were missionaries themselves, and Yoruba ex-slaves (Saro) even came to dominate the government of Abeokuta through an association known as the Egba United Improvement Association. Although the Sierra Leoneans disagreed among themselves on the issue of slavery – some were convinced abolitionists; others were moderates; and still others were in favor of a mild form of domestic slavery – the combined activities of the Sierra Leoneans spread the antislavery debate, but not until the 1850s, long after the founding of Sierra Leone. The repatriation of the Sierra Leoneans occurred largely as a result of the initiatives of the ex-slaves themselves. The British government was reluctant to commit itself to any substantial support, and the EUIA was even seen as an embarrassment and openly opposed on many issues. Even though the CMS and Wesleyans encouraged the extension of Christianity through the medium of the repatriates, neither missionaries nor government wanted the Sierra Leoneans to lead the fight against slavery.

The establishment of Liberia was an even more cautious step toward abolition, which had important implications in the United States but virtually no impact on ending slavery in West Africa. Founded in 1821 as a colony for freed slaves from the United States, only 1,430 Afro-Americans arrived in the first decade. Several times that number arrived in the 1830s, and some slaves seized by American ships off the Guinea coast were landed at Monrovia, too – the total number of “recaptives” only reached 5,722. In part, the impact of the Liberians was minimal because they were located on a stretch of coast dominated by the Kru, where there were few slaves; as a community of immigrant farmers and merchants, they were also relatively isolated from local African society. Unlike the Sierra Leoneans, moreover, the Liberians did not attempt to return to their ancestral homes, so that their influence remained confined

to Monrovia and a few smaller settlements along the Liberian coast. The U.S. government provided small subsidies to Liberia (which became an independent republic in 1847), but the American influence was otherwise marginal in the fight against slavery.⁷

As in Sierra Leone, the British tried to pursue a policy of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of African states elsewhere along the Guinea coast, although the naval blockade of the coast meant that the British were involved, whether they liked it or not. The blockade strained relations between Great Britain and Asante, for example, and given that the British controlled a number of trade-castles on the Gold Coast and acquired others from the Danes and the Dutch, the strained relations with Asante even broke out into open warfare several times in the nineteenth century.⁸ Because Asante had to adjust to the collapse of its export trade in slaves, the government had to manage its economy carefully to compensate for the decline in revenue. Gold and kola production were increased, but commercial policies associated with this effort antagonized coastal merchants and invariably drew the British into conflict with Asante. Asante was relatively successful in managing its foreign trade as a means of limiting the economic dislocation caused by the ending of slave exports, judged by the European accounts of Asante prosperity in this period, but commercial policies required tight control of the slave population.

Slave discipline was a serious problem. Not only were slave revolts greatly feared, but slaves appear to have escaped to religious shrines and to European posts on the coast in sufficient numbers to warrant official Asante measures to check these incidents. A royal proclamation issued at the time required “that all slaves who place themselves in fetish shall be immediately handed over, or the fetish priest will be punished as a thief.”⁹ To prevent flights to the coast, the Asante government signed at least one agreement with a European factor – the Dutch – in 1816, which stated “that fugitive slaves shall be given back.”¹⁰ Even more drastic measures were taken to control the slave population. Many slaves were killed in the early decades of the century, and large numbers of slaves living near Kumasi were relocated elsewhere to reduce the concentration of the slave population.¹¹

On the coast itself, the British became the sole European power once Danes, Dutch, and Brandenbergers were bought out. It fell to the British, therefore, to set the pace for further social change, and despite a brief flirtation with the idea of emancipating fugitive slaves in the 1840s, the British shied away from the slavery issue. Abolitionists charged the local British official, George Maclean, with complicity in sanctioning slavery on the Gold Coast. Sometimes he harbored fugitive slaves, or paid their market value; sometimes he returned them to their owners. British nationals were allowed to own slaves, as the estate of one deceased merchant and the practice of hiring slaves from their masters (common from the 1820s) made clear. One consequence of the debate over Maclean’s behavior was to confirm a policy of nonintervention, which did not please the abolitionists.¹² By attacking the moderate practices of Maclean, the

abolitionists inadvertently pushed the British government into a position more tolerant of slavery.

The extradition proceedings worked out by Maclean and others began to break down by the 1850s. Under the governorship of Sir Benjamin Pine, a dedicated abolitionist, fugitives were allowed sanctuary, although efforts were made to keep the numbers small and avoid attracting attention to escapees. Pine and others became convinced that slaves and pawns who were returned to their masters would be sacrificed – a not unlikely fate considering the need to maintain control over the servile population. Despite the attempt to minimize the problem of slavery, the contradiction between an embryonic colonial system that could no longer accept the legality of slavery and an indigenous social formation in which slavery was a central institution was bound to cause a clash. Pine recognized this in 1856, when he observed that “Our courts could not decide a case of disputed succession or scarcely any other case in which property is concerned without taking consequence of slavery. Slavery meets us at every point.”¹³ On the Gold Coast, the significant rupture with the policy of minimal confrontation did not come until 1874, when the defeat of Asante was accompanied by a proclamation abolishing slavery on the Gold Coast.

In the period before 1874, the inconsistency in British policy, both on the Gold Coast, in Sierra Leone, and elsewhere, derived from the difficulty of remaining neutral, especially when Christian missionaries or merchants needed naval protection. The desire was for nonintervention, but if British subjects were in danger or if it could be shown that African slave owners were involved in smuggling slaves past the naval blockade, then the British did intervene directly. In the 1850s, for example, when slaves rebelled at Old Calabar, the Presbyterian missionaries were endangered because they supported the insurrection. The slaves, particularly those who lived on the plantations outside the town, opposed human sacrifices at funerals. The crisis came to a head in 1854, when fifty slaves were killed at one sacrifice. After a series of riots, the navy bombarded part of the town. Thereafter, the practice of killing slaves became less common. Despite the favor this gained among the slaves, the missions were largely isolated as a result of their pursuit of this and other reforms. Consequently, only 1,671 people had been converted by 1875.¹⁴ The slow pace of conversion had a sobering influence on mission activities, both at Old Calabar and elsewhere.

At other places along the coast, the general policy remained nonintervention, unless local events assumed preeminence and forced some modification. The British occupied Lagos in 1851 but refused to confer a legal status on this action until 1861, when Lagos became a protectorate. The port was seized to disrupt the slave trade, which was the usual rationale for military action. Until 1859, domestic slavery was accepted. Benjamin Campbell, the British Consul at Lagos from 1853 to 1859, assured a number of large slave owners: “the British Government had no disposition to interfere with the state of domestic slavery existing in Africa.”¹⁵ Many slaves thought otherwise. They saw in

British occupation a signal for escape, and soon the arrival of fugitive slaves reached crisis proportions. Maclean had earlier reported that runaway slaves were a problem on the Gold Coast, but the Lagos situation was far more critical.¹⁶ Maclean had been able to check the flight of slaves. It was not possible to do so at Lagos after 1859. The actions of slaves, as at Old Calabar, altered British policy, unintentionally but decisively.

Despite some attempts to convince Yoruba masters that the British would respect their ownership of slaves, asylum was granted in almost every case. There were so many slaves by the early 1860s that William McCoskry, the acting governor, provided special accommodation:

In consequence of the numerous slaves seeking protection here I have found it necessary to appoint a man to take charge of and to find work for them.... In order to make the establishment for liberated slaves self-supporting, I devote a small portion of their earnings to defray the expenses and I consider they suffer no injustice in thus providing for their own protection and in supporting an asylum which will be always open for those of their friends who can effect their escape.¹⁷

The British soon found work for some of these escaped slaves. They were enlisted into the colonial army, the Hausa Armed Police Force, and became agents in the conquest of a British Empire in Africa.

The recruitment of fugitives as soldiers and police proved to be extremely successful, particularly because ex-slaves were highly motivated and had no loyalties to their master's country. The British, later followed by the French and Germans, pursued these recruitment policies for the rest of the century. The British even sent delegations to Salaga after 1874 to buy slaves for the army; the official reason was that slaves were being granted their freedom.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the Salaga merchants were more accurate in their perception of the British recruitment officer: He wanted slaves and was willing to pay the market price. Late in the century, the Belgians wanted to form military units for use in the Congo from among the Hausa and other northern fugitives at Lagos and on the Gold Coast, but the British opposed this move because it might inhibit their own recruitment of police and soldiers. In one sense, European attitudes toward military recruitment fit into an African model in which slaves had long been used in armies. There was a significant difference, however. Soldiers of fugitive origins were exposed to a new ideology, based on the abolition of slavery, and when they marched through the countryside during campaigns, other slaves were informed of new ideas and encouraged to escape. Whereas the colonial officials and officers themselves did not openly undermine African societies, their soldiers often did, particularly in the various British campaigns in Yoruba country during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁹

The official desire for nonintervention did not change, but the political situation certainly did, especially in the 1870s. The 1874 emancipation decree and the defeat of proslavery Asante encouraged thousands of slaves to escape,

although officials on the coast attempted to conceal the movement through reference to a “benign” domestic slavery. In late 1873, James Marshall, chief magistrate and judicial assessor for the Gold Coast Colony, could state:

I have not known any instance of domestic slaves leaving their owners for our castles, forts or settlements on this long line of the coast during the last two years; They are part and parcel of their families, to which they are so much attached as their children are, consequently there is no damage to be apprehended at this point.²⁰

Despite this effort to downplay the crisis, the temporary collapse of Asante gave slaves their chance, and many took it. The actions of British troops, who encouraged desertion among slaves, and the gradual erosion of extradition arrangements had their effect too, as did the continued preaching of the Basel and other missionaries. In 1874, it was no longer possible to ignore the flight of slaves, although attempts were still made to minimize its significance. Hence another official reported that “a series of migrations is going on to and from different parts of the country but whatever exodus takes place from a district is, in general, almost equally balanced by the influx of persons who return to it from other districts where they in like manner have been in servitude.”²¹ Basel missionaries reported people on the move too, and their missions became sanctuaries for escaped slaves and pawns.

Whole villages of slaves deserted, especially in Abuakwa, which may have lost as many as 10,000 slaves and pawns in the late 1870s. The Basel missions provided sanctuary; their congregations – consisting almost entirely of fugitives – swelled to several thousand in the 1880s. Krobo and Akwapim also experienced losses, although on a smaller scale, whereas Ada – the salt-producing area near the mouth of the Volta and a major center of the palm-oil trade – suffered severely. Almost every master lost a slave; some lost ten or more. By 1893, fugitives had founded at least a dozen villages in the interior of Accra. Although information is most complete on the eastern Gold Coast area, slaves also fled from Fante areas farther west, and slaves from the interior who served as porters to the coast also escaped in increasing numbers.²²

The missions increasingly served as a catalyst for the turbulence among slaves, especially during the 1870s and later. The missionaries, particularly the Church Missionary Society, had always been troubled over the issue of slavery in African society. They were firmly opposed to the slave trade and enslavement; indeed, the missions were intimately associated with the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Their activities in Africa were in fact a direct outgrowth of the abolition movement, but their observations and policies contributed to the justification of actions that were lenient toward domestic slavery. On the one hand, they pledged to fight slavery as part of the general reform of African society associated with the spread of Christianity; on the other, they generally concluded that conversion to Christianity should precede the abolition of slavery. Slaveholders, for example, were allowed to become Christians. Slavery was to be tolerated temporarily, so that the Christian church could be

established. Only when Christians were a majority of the population would it be safe to abolish slavery.²³

Besides the CMS, other missionaries in West Africa included the Southern Baptists, strong in the Yoruba region, the Methodists, centered at Badagry and on the Gold Coast, two Catholic missions, the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Société des Missions Africaines, and the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast. Each experienced trauma over the slavery issue, with some missionaries offering sanctuary to slaves and openly condemning the institution. In general, however, these more radical views were contained after an initial burst of enthusiasm that resulted in local danger to the missions. By the 1850s and 1860s, a more moderate policy was adopted, although by then the missions were seen as opponents of slavery anyway. Sometimes slaves fled to the mission stations whether or not they were encouraged to do so. The limiting factor on the number of fugitives was the relatively restricted area of Christian activity, confined principally to a few coastal points, towns along the Niger River, and some Yoruba cities where Christians remained a tiny minority until late in the century. Then one of two patterns emerged. In the Biafran area, abolition and Christianity became intricately linked. Beginning in the 1850s at Old Calabar and spreading to the Niger delta and up the Niger River in the 1870s, reforms and rebellions were associated with fugitive slaves, slave-converts to Christianity, and mission interference in local affairs. Elsewhere, most missions and the growing number of African Christians reached an accommodation over the issue of slavery, and the radical movement became associated with the CMS alone. The growing crisis involving escaped slaves in the Yoruba area was partly associated with these missions and partly with British army recruitment.²⁴ Almost certainly, however, the preaching of all Christian ministers contributed to the dissemination of ideas that seriously questioned the established order, and in that sense they fed the flames of discontent.

The movement for a changed status that began in the 1850s at Old Calabar soon spread to other centers in the Niger delta. It first took the form of resistance to abuse, as it had when the Calabar slaves struggled against the right of their masters to sacrifice slaves at funerals. At Bonny, the ascension of King George Pepple I in 1867 led to an internal movement for emancipation. The King was Christian, educated in England, and sympathized with the discontent of slaves over their status. Ironically, his struggle for emancipation and his association with the Christian faction, which was composed almost entirely of slaves, pitted him against a former slave, Jaja, who had become the wealthiest merchant at Bonny and head of the Annie Pepple establishment. Jaja staged an abortive coup d'état against the king and subsequently removed his followers to Opobo, where he successfully challenged the commercial position of his rivals at Bonny. The case is instructive for several reasons. First of all, it demonstrates the extreme social mobility of some slaves in the delta; Jaja rose from the ranks of newly purchased young Igbo slaves to the heights of commercial success and political power.²⁵ It also shows that many slaves supported

the Christian missions in their fight against slavery, thereby revealing extreme dissatisfaction among the servile population, again because of immolation at funerals and economic exploitation.

The struggle between converted slaves and traditional authorities took many forms in the Niger delta. At Bonny in the 1870s, Christian converts were chained and tortured, their heads smashed with clubs. Despite this, more than 1,000 slaves had become Christian by 1882. At Brass, an African missionary led his slave converts in a coup d'état in 1879, which ended in the destruction of the local shrine.²⁶ The pattern is clear. Whereas slaves had formerly been subject to the will of their masters, who could kill them, sell them, or donate them for sacrifice at shrines, now it was difficult for masters to punish slaves if they were Christian. Social mobility for slaves continued in the Niger delta, but it was because of their own actions, through the threat of force, that they achieved this.

Because of the abolition movement along the West African coast, slavery was under serious strain by the 1890s, even though this was not the intention of British policy. The initiative came internally. The worldwide economic depressions of the 1880s and 1890s adversely affected the export of palm oil and kernels, so that large producers, using slave labor, were forced to push their slaves harder. Some slaves probably fled as a result. The presence of missionaries who became bolder in their acceptance of runaways, as the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast did, was also a factor.²⁷ Colonial military action continued to be directed against the largest slave owners; expeditions such as the march on Aro Chukwu in 1901 accelerated the collapse of slavery.²⁸ As slave labor became scarce, farmers and merchants had to use the labor of pawns on an ever-increasing scale.²⁹ Hence the rise of small producers was matched by the expansion of pawnship, as people were forced into debt in these difficult times. The imposition of colonial rule, therefore, involved a complex readjustment that was closely associated with the decline in slavery. As the final emancipation of slaves in Sierra Leone in 1926 demonstrated, slavery did not end with colonial rule, and its legacy influenced economic and social developments for several more decades. Nonetheless, by 1900, the institution was profoundly altered, the initial stages of its collapse caused as much by the actions of slaves themselves as by any other factor.

Christian Missions in Central and East Africa

The abolition impulse came much later to central and East Africa than to the West African coast, and when it came, the missionaries had proportionately greater influence until the 1890s. European intervention here was very restricted, primarily to Zanzibar, South Africa, and a few scattered places elsewhere. Furthermore, European imperial attitudes were more mixed. The British pursued policies similar to those in West Africa, but the Portuguese and Belgians were far less susceptible to abolitionist sentiments. The Portuguese

promoted the use of slaves in their domains until the early twentieth century, although under different names and with some restrictions. The Belgians were so interested in the extraction of profit from the Congo basin through the use of force and brutality that the slavery issue only served as an embarrassment and then as a convenient scapegoat. Finally, the distinction between productive slavery and lineage slavery influenced the course of abolition. Where slavery was a major feature of production, abolitionist pressure, despite the fact that it came late, led to a transition from slavery to other forms of servility and oppression; in general, freedom was not an option. Where lineage slavery was predominant, the imposition of colonialism reduced the institution to a marginal role, more by the requirements of the colonial economy than by the conscious efforts to erase slavery from the social order.

The wrath of the abolitionists was directed at the Muslims, particularly Arabs and Swahili, who were held responsible for the slave trade. When missionaries began to write exposés on the horrors of a savage continent where the slave coffles and the destruction by the slavers were unchecked, there was little concern with “domestic” slavery. David Livingstone initiated this attack in the 1850s and was soon followed by others. The German Wissman, the American Stanley, the Scottish Cameron, among others, rivaled each other in advertising the potential of the region by contrasting glorious projections against a picture of depopulated regions, barbarous customs, and incalculable brutality. In 1874, V. L. Cameron could write from Lake Tanganyika that “the slave trade is spreading in the interior, and will continue to do so until it is either put down by a strong hand, or dies a natural death from the total destruction of the population. At present events are tending towards depopulation.”³⁰ Cardinal Lavigerie came to the fore in this attack on the slave trade. Domestic slavery, except as it related to the use of slaves as porters by Arabs and Swahili, was scarcely mentioned in this onslaught. In West Africa, domestic slavery was tolerated; in central Africa, it was largely ignored.

As was the case in many parts of Africa, the Christian missions were the most active agents in the fight against indigenous slavery, although they too often concentrated on slave raiding and trade rather than the plight of domestic slaves. The CMS established a mission at Rabai, near Mombasa, in 1846, but the missionaries shied away from the slavery issue. The Rabai community remained very small until the 1870s, when slavery could no longer be ignored. The United Methodist Free Churches founded a mission at Ribe, 10 km from Rabai, in 1862, by which time the problem of fugitive slaves was already serious. The Ribe missionaries still tried to minimize their appeal to the slave community of the Mombasa area, however. The Holy Ghost Fathers, on Zanzibar, began buying slave children for conversion as early as 1860, and they pursued a similar policy at Bagamoyo, on the mainland opposite Zanzibar. Despite the conservative approach of the missionaries – Catholic and Protestant alike – the mission stations gained a reputation as refugee centers for slaves, and by the 1870s, the number of fugitive slaves seeking asylum increased. After 1875,

when the CMS established Frere Town opposite Mombasa as an industrial mission for liberated slaves, including repatriates from India, the mission communities grew rapidly.³¹

Slave escapes already plagued the Swahili plantation society of the coast before the Christian community became a factor. In the late 1860s, escaped slaves (*watoro*) formed a recognizable portion of the population of Witu, near Lamu, where the exiled Nabahani family of Pate had established itself. In its struggle against Zanzibar, the Nabahani welcomed fugitive slaves, who left the plantations on the mainland opposite Lamu by the hundreds – the total number of escapes may have reached several thousand by the end of the century. These *watoro* plundered the plantation region of the coast, seizing slaves for sale to Somali merchants in the north (in exchange for guns and ammunition), although sometimes the Nabahani sultans tried to restrain the *watoro* to stabilize relations with Zanzibar. By the 1880s and 1890s, Witu had developed a plantation economy itself, and some escaped slaves had become slave owners. Witu offered sanctuary to fugitives not as a matter of principle but as a matter of politics. Nonetheless, both in the Lamu area and elsewhere, slaves could find sanctuary in places, like Witu and, to a lesser extent, Gasi, which were opposed to the hegemony of Zanzibar.³²

In the Malindi area, fugitive slaves established an independent community in the early 1870s that became allied with the Christian missions by the end of the 1870s. Fugitives fled into the marshes 20 to 30 km inland from Malindi and, despite repeated expeditions against them, maintained communities at Jilore and later at Merikano and Makogeni. In 1875 and again in 1877, the Jilore and Makogeni fugitives sought CMS missionaries, and when Malindi expeditions in March 1878 and 1879 were particularly devastating, many fugitives fled south to the mission stations at Rabai and Ribe. By 1881, fugitive slaves formed a sizeable quarter in the settlement at Rabai.³³

Another fugitive community associated with missionary activity was established at Fuladoyo, 50 km from Takaungu. Fuladoyo was initially a community of Christians who had been loosely attached to the CMS at Rabai. Under the leadership of David Koi, fugitive slaves were welcome as long as they converted to Christianity. The CMS kept its distance from this community, but over the next fifteen years, Fuladoyo became the largest settlement of escaped slaves south of the Tana River. The number of Christians living there surpassed the total Christian population of the mission stations at Frere Town, Rabai, and Ribe, despite the fact that the slave owners of Takaungu organized a devastating raid that destroyed the town in 1883. Koi was taken prisoner and executed, but the fugitives regrouped. Fuladoyo was rebuilt, and retaliatory raids were launched against the Takaungu plantations. By 1890, Fuladoyo and its satellite communities had an estimated population of 2,000.³⁴

The fugitive issue was a difficult problem for the CMS, whose communities at Frere Town and Rabai were allowed to exist at the tolerance of the Mombasa government. Official CMS policy could not condone the acceptance of fugitives

into the mission stations, which was one reason why Fuladoyo, as an independent community, was so successful. The difficulty of controlling overzealous members of the mission stations plagued the CMS throughout the late 1870s and 1880s. William Henry Jones, for example, who was the deacon at Rabai from 1878 through the 1880s, secretly welcomed fugitives, whose identity he hid from his superiors. Jones, an ex-slave of Yao origin, had been at Rabai since 1864. He had sheltered at least 524 escaped slaves by 1888, when his involvement was uncovered in a special inquiry.³⁵ It was thought that a slave uprising was being organized at Frere Town in 1880; at last, a mob of Mombasa slave owners attacked the mission, and it was later admitted that there was a white flag at the mission that had "freedom" written on it in Swahili. Whether or not there was a real plot is uncertain, but certainly the slave owners of Mombasa thought so, and the CMS tried to restrain its members from any actions that would place the safety of the mission in jeopardy. The same inquiry into Jones's conduct in accepting fugitives at Rabai revealed that the mission stations had harbored more than 1,400 escaped slaves by 1888. The CMS extricated itself from this situation by convincing the Imperial British East Africa Company to compensate the Mombasa government for these slaves, thereby effectively purchasing their freedom. In all, 1,421 certificates of freedom were issued to runaway slaves.³⁶

The introduction of Christian missions into central Africa was also closely associated with the fight against slavery, although the early mission of the Protestant Universities Mission established by its example that slavery was a difficult issue. Founded in the 1860s on the western shores of Lake Malawi, the mission offered sanctuary to fugitive slaves and was annihilated as a result.³⁷ Not until 1876, and the arrival of the Church of Scotland mission, was there another attempt at founding a Christian community, and even then the European missionaries learned their lesson slowly. At first, the policies toward slavery were similar to those adopted by the earlier, abortive UMCA mission. Within a few years, Blantyre was surrounded by seven villages that were inhabited primarily by fugitive slaves, despite local opposition and occasional violence. By March 1878, "Blantyre has become an asylum for the slave."³⁸ The policy was to sabotage local slavery, as can be seen in the comments of the Reverend Macklin on the arrival of six fugitives:

The mission in its civil and social aspects is making reasonable and satisfactory progress. As an asylum for the poor, persecuted slave, Blantyre is becoming known and prized. We have now six fellow-creatures rescued from the lash of the driver, and miseries worse than death. And this in turn, prepares them for giving a ready reception to the free offers of the greater emancipation, salvation by grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.³⁹

Within two years, however, the mission retreated fully from the issue of slavery. No longer was Blantyre to be a place of refuge. Fugitive slaves were subsequently returned to their masters, even when this resulted in the death

of fugitives. Expediency was again the rule, for the head of the mission, the Reverend Duff MacDonald, was after a different breed of convert and feared the consequences of an antislavery crusade:

As I mingled more with our neighbours, I saw that our reception of runaway slaves had alienated many excellent men who might have been our best friends, and who were better able to rule slaves than we. If the colonial work disappeared the purely Missionary work would be more successful, and the colonial work might gradually be suffered to disappear if slave refugees were denied an asylum.... The reception of slaves no doubt had certain advantages. Already nearly 400 had sought an asylum in order to escape death. The Mission had thus saved a great many lives, but at a terrible risk. Its course of action had made enemies of all the slave-owners in the district, and even tended to increase the slave-trade, for when a master saw that his slaves might run to the English, he resolved to sell them off as soon as possible. Again, the reception of persons who had fled to escape death or any of the other hard consequences of slavery, soon led anyone that fancied he had a grievance, to desert his master and seek refuge at the Mission, while the kindly treatment he experienced made him desirous of having his friends or relatives with him to share his advantages. Thus the settlement was in danger of becoming a larger state, composed of all the discontented people of the country.⁴⁰

MacDonald's distinction between "colonial work" and "Missionary work," the secular and the spiritual, enabled him to ignore the plight of slaves, something that many other missionaries had difficulty doing. Despite the restraint of men like MacDonald, the missions became associated with freedom. As MacDonald realized, the possibilities for revolutionary change were present if slaves were allowed to flee en masse and could be brought together as a political force. The risks were too high for the Scottish Church of Blantyre. Direct action would have required military support, either from a colonial government or from an independent force armed and trained by the missionaries themselves. The naive ministers, like Macklin, did not perceive this. The astute men, like MacDonald, did but refused to adopt such a course of action.

The White Fathers, under the inspiration of Cardinal Lavigerie, did attempt a more vigorous approach, partly through the purchase of slaves and partly by providing sanctuary for fugitives. In 1879, a mission was established on Lake Tanganyika at Rumonge, 100 km north of the lake port at Ujiji, and another was founded at Masanze, across the lake, in 1880. Because Ujiji was the center of Nyamwezi, Swahili, and Arab trade into the interior, and there were many slave plantations around the town, the slavery policy inevitably embroiled the White Fathers in local politics, and in 1881, the station was destroyed. Unlike the Scottish Church, however, the White Fathers moved ahead, establishing a new post at Kibanga on the west side of the lake in 1883, and within five years, the mission had grown to 2,000, including 300 slave children in its orphanage and 200 adults who had been bought as slaves. Many of the other converts were fugitives. Kibanga was on its way to becoming a small Christian kingdom in the heart of central Africa.⁴¹

The Christian missions provided the catalyst through their purchase of slaves and offers of sanctuary, but the record shows clearly that the slaves themselves were primarily responsible for taking the initiative that began to undermine slavery. Despite mission efforts to discourage escapes, slave fugitives became increasingly common in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Many slaves escaped to the missions or into the interior during the revolts on the Kenyan coast in the 1890s. *Maji-maji* uprisings against the Germans in the first decade of the twentieth century offered similar opportunities for slaves there.⁴²

Because slavery had not been transformed into a productive system in most of the interior, the colonial regimes were not especially concerned with the plight of slaves. All five European governments – French, Belgian, Portuguese, British, and German – instituted taxation and labor policies designed to force Africans to work for European firms or to provide raw materials for export. These policies had little to do with lineage slavery, which was seen neither as an impediment nor as an asset in the mobilization of the African population. The Belgians instituted an especially harsh system of exploitation. In the 1890s, the Congo Free State granted concessions to giant companies whose profits were based on the extraction of raw materials with the use of forced labor. No distinctions were made between slaves and free; the existing social order was largely ignored, and even when the Belgian colonial regime assumed control of the Congo basin in 1908, the emphasis was on the extraction of agricultural products and other goods through the power of the state and large, foreign companies.⁴³ Slavery continued as a marginal institution. Cannibalism and funeral sacrifices were outlawed, so that slavery soon lost some functions it had provided in the old social order. When the African population as a whole was being reduced to a migrant labor force for the mines and an exploited peasantry forced to cultivate select crops for the state and private companies, these older social distinctions had little relevance.

The British, too, largely ignored slavery once the slave supply mechanism that fed the plantations of the east coast was disassembled. Instead, racial segregation became the basis of an altered means of separating the working population from its employers. Again, as in the Congo, a migrant labor force was needed, and racism provided a strong justification for mobilizing Africans into a malleable working class. Again, the slavery of old had little place in this new industrial system, and even the Boer system of apprenticeship gave way to migrant labor. Only where slavery had been essential to production, as on Zanzibar and Pemba, was there a particularly difficult transition, but the island setting prevented escape. Various measures were enacted so that the ex-slaves would continue to work on the plantations. These included vagrancy laws, manipulation of credit, control over land, and other resources that bear comparison with the West Indies after emancipation there.⁴⁴ The Portuguese enacted laws that perpetuated forms of labor that were similar to slavery under different names.⁴⁵ In all these cases, slavery became lost in the colonial

dictatorship. On a much reduced scale, lineage slavery continued to function on the margins of society, but its social and political importance ended with the establishment of colonial rule.

The Imperialist Justification of Islamic Slavery

In contrast to the other parts of Africa, in the northern savanna, missionaries had scarcely any impact at all on the abolition of slavery, at least not until the twentieth century. The campaign in these Islamic lands was confined almost exclusively to official government actions, the French in the western Sudan and the British in northern Nigeria and the Nile valley. Ethiopia was different still, for in maintaining its independence from European control until the 1930s, it also retained slavery as a major feature of society even when international pressures for abolition began to mount in the 1920s. Consequently, the concern here is with the Islamic lands only and the evolution of French and British policies. In general the French and British attempted to reach an accommodation with Islamic leaders, and for this reason Christian missionaries were excluded from many areas and confined to border regions away from the centers of power whenever possible. Otherwise, missions proved to be a vexing problem, as the French found out in Mali, Guinea, and Senegal. In reaching a settlement with African rulers, both colonial states found it necessary to dispose of militant Muslim leaders; for the French, this list included Ahmadu of Segu Tukolor, defeated in 1893, Samori, whose forces in southern Mali and adjacent areas were eliminated in 1898, and Rabeh, who controlled parts of southern Chad and Bornu, also crushed in 1898. For the British, only the Mahdiyya, under the leadership of Caliph 'Abdallah, were a comparable enemy, and he was defeated in 1898. The British replaced the leadership of the Sokoto Caliphate, but it was not necessary to dismantle the state, as was the case elsewhere. All these actions came late, and by this time the general policy toward slavery had already been established.

The early attack on slavery in the western Sudan was directed mainly at the trade in slaves, not their indigenous use, even though the French introduced the *engagés à temps* system in 1817 and emancipated some slaves in 1848. The *engagé* system, requiring the indenture of slaves for periods ranging from ten to fourteen years, was a subterfuge that allowed the Senegalese government to acquire slaves for its own use, including military conscription.⁴⁶ The 1848 decree covered emancipated slaves throughout the French empire, but the French sphere in Senegambia was narrowly defined to include only the four communes. The colonial regime took strong measures to prevent Saint Louis and Gorée from becoming sanctuaries for fugitives. Escaped slaves were expelled as vagrants and returned to their masters. A modified form of slavery even continued in the towns themselves under the myth that slave children were “adopted” into local families. Not until the 1870s did the abolitionist forces have a serious influence on French policy toward slavery.⁴⁷

In 1876, the French temporarily annexed Walo and Dimar, after defeating the anticolonial forces of Bubakar. Annexation automatically extended emancipation laws into the new provinces, and as a result, an estimated 3,000 people – large slave owners and their slaves – moved east. Although the French regime quickly reversed its annexation decree to placate slave owners and encourage the return of the exiles, the gradual move toward the end of slavery once more was apparent. By 1883, fugitive slaves were free upon reaching the communes, although escaped slaves were still discouraged from living in the towns. In 1892, a conference was held with political leaders from the region in which the French recognized that domestic slaves were servants and not slaves. The newly classified “servants” had the right to buy their freedom and to receive a certificate of liberty from the French. The leaders of Kayor, Sine, Saalum, and Dimar accepted these terms; in 1894, the Futa Toro government nominally agreed too. The effects, however, were minimal, as was expected. In Futa Toro, for example, only a few hundred certificates were issued each year between 1895 and 1903, and most of these were to women who had probably borne children by their masters and could expect to be freed anyway.⁴⁸ In the far interior, there was no active intervention against slavery – not even in these superficial ways – until it became expedient to encourage the slaves of belligerent states to flee to the French as a means of undermining the power of opponents.

The other nominal commitment to abolition was the establishment of *villages de liberté* along the lines of military advance. These villages became the homes of those slaves who escaped from enemy territory, but their name was even more deceptive than Freetown in Sierra Leone. Villages were located along supply lines to produce crops, and locally their inhabitants were often seen as slaves of the French government, not freed slaves. The *villages de liberté* resembled the plantations from which many of the fugitives had fled, and fugitives frequently used them as a temporary place of refuge before deserting to somewhere else. Slave owners could even claim their slaves from these settlements within a month of their escape. Given that masters from belligerent states were unlikely to do so, this policy effectively guaranteed that the slaves of masters in friendly territory would not escape. Furthermore, the heavy labor obligations in the villages acted as a deterrent against more massive desertions.⁴⁹

As was the case in the use of slaves in the British colonial armies, the French also relied on slaves for its Senegalese *tirailleurs* as well as for its auxiliaries. Because the French never had more than 4,000 troops in West Africa, the conquest of the western Sudan depended on African recruits, so that – as elsewhere – a force including many ex-slaves conquered Africa for the colonialists.⁵⁰ In a sense, the French created a slave force reminiscent of the old *tyeddo* slave warriors who were overthrown by the Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century. Even as the French commitment to abolition became firmer – despite the individual actions of administrators – the French slave army continued to recruit slaves, almost as if the military was tied to some archaic tradition that

French officials conveniently did not understand. This atavism was carried to extremes. As late as 1891, the *commandant* at Kita could report to his superior that some of the slaves – especially women – seized during military campaigns were being parcelled out to the soldiers, in partial compensation for salary: “I am going to distribute the slaves in order to have fewer mouths to feed. Of course, I will keep a certain number for your men, who will be available to them after your campaign: you can tell them that for me in order to stimulate them a little.”⁵¹ Like the *engagés à temps* and the *villages de liberté*, slavery was adapted to colonial ambitions when possible; only the propaganda changed to disguise colonial exploitation in the language of abolition. As late as 1895, the French administrator Penel tried to convince proabolitionist governor Grodet:

no man of good sense having experience of the land will counsel immediate abolition of slavery. That would provoke a general uprising, to which also slaves would participate and which would ruin the colony.... Commerce, which is progressing, would be paralyzed. Thus we are under an obligation to accommodate ourselves for the time being to the institution of slavery. Previously, and at every occasion, we have formally promised the natives that we will not directly suppress slavery.... In all our dealings with the Blacks, it is necessary to be loyal, consistent, or lose moral credibility in their eyes.⁵²

The issue was a convenient ruse to gain public support in Europe for imperialist ambitions. It was usually difficult for government officials to resist some kind of public statement that supported the humanitarian cry to end the slave trade and slavery. At times it proved useful for one European country to condemn another because too little was being done to end the evil institution. Penel's remarks, nonetheless, reveal another twist. For him, supporting slavery became an indication of loyalty and consistency, despite more than half a century of verbal commitment to abolition. The real battle over abolition may have waxed and waned during the period, but the trend was clear, as Penel himself realized. Slavery had to end; the colonial occupation would inevitably eliminate enslavement as a means of adding to the slave population. The slave trade, too, would subside and eventually stop. Surely, Penel could not really believe that the French position raised questions of morality, as he stated. Supporting slavery was expedient, but it had nothing to do with maintaining moral credibility.

The British concentrated their efforts on ending the trans-Saharan and Red Sea slave trade, and their intervention in the Nile valley, under the auspices of Ottoman and Egyptian authority, was an extension of this campaign. British policy was no more directed against indigenous slavery than elsewhere in the savanna. European administrators pursued the attack on the slave trade most zealously in the late 1870s and early 1880s. England wanted to clean up the image of the Egyptian government, which had become increasingly visible to the European public with the opening of the strategically vital Suez Canal. These efforts collapsed in 1884 with the emergence of the Mahdist state. The British were able to contain the export trade in slaves, except along the Wadai-Kufra

route across the Sahara, but they had no effect on indigenous slavery, raiding, or trade until the occupation of the Sudan in 1896. Because the Mahdist state was strongly committed to slavery, the colonial regime refused to emancipate slaves and thereby rekindle the flames of discontent over the issue that had been a major factor in the Mahdist success. Instead, the continuation of slavery was accepted on the basis of British-interpreted Islamic law.⁵³

Kitchener, the British governor of Sudan after the conquest, issued the following instructions to his provincial officers in 1899:

Slavery is not recognized in the Soudan, but as long as service is willingly rendered by servants to masters it is unnecessary to interfere in the conditions existing between them.... I leave it to your discretion to adopt the best methods of gradually eradicating the habit of depending upon the slave labor which has so long been part of the religious creed and customs of this country, and which it is impossible to remove at once without doing great violence to the feelings and injuring the prosperity of the inhabitants. Without proclaiming any intention of abruptly doing away with all slave-holding, much can be done in the way of discouraging it and teaching the people to get on without it.⁵⁴

The British regime went farther. Its officials became experts in Islamic law, and they interpreted the provisions on slavery in a manner that would justify its continuation, with modifications. Slave officials were eased out of office, but concubinage was left intact. Slave labor remained an essential component of the economy until the pilgrimage traffic from West Africa brought a migrant labor force to replace slavery. There was nothing radical in the policy toward slavery, only in the criminalization of the slave trade and the termination of large-scale enslavement. These changes invariably affected the ability to replenish the supply of slaves. Islamic ideals – the conversion of slaves, their emancipation, and eventual incorporation into society as clients – were officially promoted. The British eliminated some elements of the slave system and encouraged its patrimonial dimensions. Ironically, slavery became more “Islamic” under the British regime than previously.

This policy of using Islamic law and customary treatment of slaves to contain a potentially explosive situation was well established when the British marched on the central provinces of the Sokoto Caliphate in the first three years of the twentieth century. Slavery was manipulated for imperial purposes. Joseph Chamberlain, British Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903, thought that “sooner or later we shall have to fight some of the slave dealing tribes and we cannot have a better *casus belli*.... Public opinion here requires that we shall justify imperial control of these savage countries by some serious effort to put down slave dealing.”⁵⁵

By the time the British conquered the central provinces of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903, a slavery policy already existed. Its architect, Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard, combined elements of British experience in the Lake Malawi region, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and coastal West Africa. Lugard

brought to the Sokoto Caliphate a sense of political realism that excluded the immediate abolition of slavery but rather sanctioned the abolition of the legal status of slavery – a subtle distinction drawn from British experience in India, which did not actually emancipate slaves. In his instructions to his subordinates in 1906, Lugard explained his position in the following terms:

[T]o prematurely abolish the almost universal form of labor contract, before a better system had been developed to take its place, would not only be an act of administrative folly, but would be an injustice to the masters, since Domestic Slavery is an institution sanctioned by the law of Islam, and property in slaves was as real as any other form of property among the Mohammedan population at the time that the British assumed the Government, a nullification of which would amount to nothing less than wholesale confiscation.⁵⁶

Faced with a population that contained several million slaves, Lugard successfully established British colonialism without disrupting the social order. As in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, he interpreted Islamic law in new ways to modify the institution of slavery and to permit a transition to wage labor and tenant farming peacefully. These modifications included a reliance on acts of emancipation that would offer an incentive for slaves to accept the new order willingly.

The institution of *murgu* was the cornerstone of this reform. In the nineteenth century, masters could let slaves work on their own account under *murgu* arrangements, in return for a fixed payment, usually weekly or monthly. Sometimes slaves earned enough capital to purchase their freedom, if the owner agreed to set a price and the price was reasonable. The act was considered pious because an owner who set a relatively low price was effectively assuming a financial loss in allowing the slave his freedom. The British changed this. Now a master had to agree to set a fair price on any slave who requested the arrangement of *murgu*. Failure to do so was a matter for the courts. This was not the only reform. As in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, slave officials were gradually displaced, and the prison for recalcitrant slaves was closed. Finally, the British decreed that all persons born after April 1, 1901 were technically free, so that the slave population was well on its way to extinction by the time all slaves were emancipated in 1936.⁵⁷

A crucial dimension of both British and French policies involved the treatment of escaped slaves. At the same time that slaves who stayed with their master were given greater rights and the lure of eventual emancipation, if not for themselves then for their children, the lot of escaped slaves was made as difficult as possible. The freed-slave villages of the French along railway lines and supply routes hardly encouraged escapes in the western Sudan, although slaves sometimes used the villages as temporary refuges before fleeing further. The British enacted vagrancy laws in which the government prevented new settlers from obtaining land in a village unless they had sufficient capital to provision themselves for a year. This was designed to impede the movement of

fugitive slaves. The British also destroyed some fugitive-slave villages in areas where slaves had retreated into defensible hill locations. The military solution took several decades, and not until the 1930s were all the hill retreats in Nigeria “pacified.”

Nonetheless, all these measures, including the efforts of the colonial regimes to disguise the slavery issue, failed to prevent the massive flight of slaves in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Throughout the savanna, slaves ran away, particularly slaves who had been on plantations. The most dramatic struggle occurred in French areas, from Banamba, Kankan, Tuba, Gumbu, and other centers of plantation agriculture.⁵⁸ Escape had long been a factor in resistance to slavery, as we have seen with respect to the problems encountered by the French and English in curtailing the influx of fugitives into occupied territory. The French had encouraged slave desertions among their enemies because it was expedient. The British promoted similar actions in the Nile valley after the expulsion of the Turco-Egyptian regime in 1884. The events of the 1890s and after were of a different order. The scale of desertion was so great that it shook the foundations of the Muslim states as much or more than the colonial conquest itself. The French had wanted to weaken the economies of Segu Tukulor, Samori, Rabeh, and other enemies; however, they did not want a social revolution. Nor did the British, as Lugard’s expressed fears reveal: “If ... slaves were to be encouraged to assert their freedom unnecessarily in large numbers, or if those so asserting it, by leaving their masters without some good cause, were indiscriminately upheld in their action by Political Officers, a state of anarchy and chaos would result, and the whole social system of the Mohammedan States would be dislocated.”⁵⁹

Beginning around 1895, slaves took the initiative in French West Africa at an accelerating rate. The advancing colonial armies provided the opportunity, as the Muslim governments were preoccupied or in disarray. A revolt shook Banamba in 1895, along with many escapes, but a few individual slaves were recaptured and severely punished, with the full support of the French, to check other insubordination. In 1896, more than 1,000 fugitive slaves were settled in a single *village de liberté* near Bakel until the majority could be sent back to their masters.⁶⁰ Complaints from slaves concerning overwork, underfeeding, and other abuses began to reach French officials, who now realized how explosive the situation really was. Work stoppages, a steady trickle of escapes, and occasional violence against masters continued into the first three years of the twentieth century. French political and judicial reforms did not help the situation. New laws in 1903 and 1905 reduced the status of slavery to a matter that was no longer recognized in French courts. Despite French reluctance to deal with slave complaints, the slaves found that they could receive an audience, even if it was only indirectly through colonial reaction to potential insurrection. In 1905 and continuing into 1906, slavery collapsed in the French western Sudan. Some semblance of order was subsequently reestablished, but not before several hundred thousand slaves had fled.⁶¹ They ran away from virtually

TABLE 11.1. *Population Increases, Selected "Cercles," Western Sudan*

<i>Cercle</i>	1905	1913	Increase	%
Bougouni	95,592	162,343	66,751	69.8
Sikasso	164,410	223,719	59,309	36.1
Koutiala	223,403	353,815	130,412	58.4
Koury	224,266	322,083	97,817	43.6
TOTAL	707,671	1,061,960	354,289	50.1

Source: Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 171, 254.

everywhere, many heading south toward their home country in the lands that Samori and Babemba had devastated. The population of the Bougouni *cercle*, for example, increased from several thousand in the late nineteenth century to 95,592 in 1905 and to 162,343 in 1913.

The *cercles* of Sikasso, Koutiala, and Bougouni experienced a dramatic increase in population too (Table 11.1). Better census techniques and natural increase may have accounted for some of the difference, but it is likely that 250,000 people moved into these *cercles* as a result of the slave exodus. Even if allowance is made for natural increase in the order of 1–2 percent per year, the rise in population was still 35 percent. Many slaves fled elsewhere too, particularly to the peanut-producing regions, railway construction sites, and government recruiting centers for porters.⁶²

The scale of the exodus was so large that it represents one of the most significant slave revolts in history. There were many efforts to stop the flight before 1905, but once the exodus began, nothing could be done. The French simply let the slaves go, and for the first time the French restrained the masters. Once the dust had settled, the remnants of the slave system were reassembled, only now the more patriarchal dimensions of slavery were predominant. The French, like the British in the Nile valley and the Sokoto Caliphate, upheld Islamic law and custom in supporting slavery, with the expectation that slavery would gradually disappear now that the most disgruntled elements of the slave population had left.

The flight of slaves was also dramatic in northern Nigeria. The British had watched slaves escape from Nupe, Lafia, and Wase across the Niger and Benue rivers since the middle of the 1890s. When slaves started deserting the farms around Yola in 1902, local slave owners became so agitated that a mob attacked the British fort.⁶³ Slave escapes also spread to Kano and Sokoto once they fell to the British in 1903; in the next couple of years, slaves left in large numbers. Some masters awoke in the morning to find their slaves gathered together, armed with bows and arrows, hoes, and knives, defiantly taunting their masters to stop them from leaving. Many returned to the areas between the emirates, where slave raiding had cleared the land. Other slaves waited to

see what the British regime would do, however, and consequently the exodus was on a smaller scale than in the French areas further west. Nonetheless, the movement continued for many years. The rapid expansion of peanut exports from Kano in 1911 introduced a level of prosperity in the rural areas that helped limit the flight. Because the British were more supportive of the Caliphate aristocracy and were particularly favorable to the merchant class, the slave owners were more unified than was the case in the areas conquered by the French. This, too, helped check the exodus. Nonetheless, many masters lost their slaves.⁶⁴

Once again slaves had taken the initiative, just as they had done along the West African coast and in parts of central and eastern Africa. The inability to replenish the slave supply through the acquisition of new captives and through trade was a serious blow to the slave system, but the action of the slaves themselves was equally decisive. Ex-slaves became migrant workers; they opened new lands that were now safe from slave raiding; and they moved to the towns of the colonial states.⁶⁵ Many slaves did not escape, but the institution had been changed dramatically. Without the possibilities of more slaves, slavery became more firmly embedded in patriarchal structures, and hence slave conditions were better. By the 1930s, slavery largely ceased to exist or was well on the way to extinction almost everywhere. Slavery seemed to be on its way to dying the “natural death” that Lugard and other colonialists anticipated.

Slavery in the Political Economy of Africa

Slavery as a Mode of Production

In analyzing the role of slavery in the political economy of Africa before 1900, I have applied a number of concepts (including “mode of production,” “social formation,” and “transformation”) to examine the expansion of productive slavery. This emphasis draws on the contributions of Marxian theorists,¹ particularly those who have explored different modes of production.² Although a number of scholars have recognized the importance of slavery to the political economy, only a few have argued that slavery assumed a crucial role. Foremost among these has been Emmanuel Terray.³

According to Terray, “a social formation cannot be understood except by beginning with an analysis of the relations of production which are its base,”⁴ and for Gyaman, and indeed for Asante as a whole, Terray establishes “the decisive importance of the exploitation of captives in the functioning of the social formation”:⁵

We have tried to bring to light the existence of an Abron social formation with a mode of production based on slavery, which organizes a considerable part of the work in three essential sectors of the economy: agriculture, gold mining and transport [portage]. But one must immediately point out that this mode of production contains specific characteristics concerning the reproduction of the social relations which constitute it. We have already alluded to these peculiarities, which can be summarized as follows: there is no natural or biological reproduction of the captive population.⁶

This last point is crucial to Terray’s model. The inability of the social formation to maintain itself without the acquisition of new slaves illustrates one of the essential characteristics of the slave mode of production, the need for continued enslavement and slave trading to sustain the social order and the economic base of the state.

The concept “mode of production,” therefore, involves a complex interaction between economy, society, and the state in a form that reproduces these relationships.⁷ The essential ingredients include the prevalence of slave labor in vital sectors of the economy, the development of class relationships based on the relegation of slaves to the bottom of the social order, and the consolidation of a political and commercial infrastructure that can maintain these forms of exploitation. Slaves need not predominate in every sector of the economy, but they must be involved in production, whatever other functions they may also fulfil. Slave owners may have many sources of income, but a substantial portion must derive from activities related to enslavement, trade in slaves, and the appropriation of the product of slave labor. When these activities are important to the political economy, then other relationships, such as those based on kinship, tribute, taxation, and plunder, are usually affected and may become dependent on relationships associated with slavery. For example, kinship structures among free peasants may become stronger as a result of the danger of slave raids. Tribute payments and taxation were often alternatives to enslavement, and the power of the state could be used to punish those who failed to maintain such subordinate relationships.

This study has pursued Terray’s formulation in the following ways: It has considered where and when slavery was a fundamental aspect of the social formation of different African societies. As a theoretical construct, a slave mode of production prevailed whenever slavery was crucial to the productive process in general or to some sector of the economy, particularly if that sector was tied to the export trade. Often this condition involved the exploitation of slave labor on a large scale, on plantations, in mines, and in the harvesting or gathering of wild products. Each of these situations involved considerable differences in the organization of production. To characterize them under a common conceptual label is to emphasize the basis of the social division of labor, not the degree of market development in the economy. The cultivation of agricultural goods under plantation conditions sometimes reflected extensive market development and sometimes not. Plantation output could be used to feed armies and palaces or it could be exported. The low level of technology meant that there was relatively little investment in capital or the improvement of land, although either form of investment could occur, as in Madagascar (hydraulic works) or Zanzibar (clove trees). Gold mining, as in Asante or Buré, could involve an even stronger market orientation than plantations. There was an investment in pits, and hence production required some inputs beside the labor of slaves. Nonetheless, because the technology was relatively simple, this investment was virtually destroyed by the rains every year, so that labor was the key variable too. The gathering of wild produce, such as gum arabic, beeswax, and rubber, was even more labor intensive. Other than in very rudimentary tools, there was no investment in technology for maintaining or increasing production. In all three situations, therefore, the crucial aspect of production was the

coordination of labor to exploit economic resources. Labor was almost the only resource that could be mobilized in a manner to affect production.

Slavery was an effective alternative to other forms of organizing labor, and hence when slavery was crucial to the productive process, we can distinguish a slave mode of production from other modes. The extraction of tribute from free peasants, the coordination of labor on the basis of kinship, the output of independent peasants in response to limited market opportunities, the development of a labor pool through debt bondage, and other means of production existed alongside slavery. The identification of a slave mode of production does not diminish the importance of these methods of labor organization, but it correctly establishes the dynamic portion of the political economy in the period from 1000 to 1900.

A wide historical and geographical perspective allows an identification of the two prerequisites for a slave mode of production. First, a slave mode of production required instruments of enslavement, and these had to be institutionalized on the political level. Specific wars may not have been fought for the sole purpose of acquiring slaves, but the enslavement of prisoners had to become an acceptable, indeed a likely, fate for captives. The ransoming of prisoners and elaborate justifications for determining who could and could not be enslaved only serve to demonstrate that such adjustments took place relatively early wherever the export of slaves was possible, and indeed in other places too. Legal, religious, and economic methods of enslavement, as varied as these were, only highlight the institutionalization of enslavement even further. Secondly, the distribution of slaves, especially through trade, also had to achieve a comparable level of organization. Slaves could be dispersed as tribute or war booty, but the market mechanism was most important in this aspect of slavery. Those who controlled these mechanisms of supply and distribution invariably were the ones who benefited from slavery as an institution. Their economic and political position was based on control over the “means of destruction,” to employ the terminology of Jack Goody, and the mechanisms of commercial exchange.⁸

Enslavement and slave trading were essential because slave populations did not reproduce themselves. Data on this demographic failure are clearest from the nineteenth century, but it is likely that wherever slavery was the basis of a mode of production, a continuous influx of new slaves had to be maintained. Morton's work on the East African coast, for example, demonstrates that slave mortality was as high as 20 percent on Pemba (1883), 10–12 percent on Zanzibar (1883), and 10 percent at Malindi (1873). He estimates that mortality was probably higher in the 1850s.⁹ Despite other important factors, slave families appear to have been reluctant to have children. Harms reports similar conclusions for the Bobangi on the Congo River; people did not want children, in part because it limited mobility and in part because it was cheaper and easier to buy children. The Bobangi population, therefore, was an unstable population

demographically.¹⁰ Comparable patterns are evident in Madagascar, the western Sudan, and elsewhere. The incorporation of women through marriage and concubinage (whose children were considered free) accounts for the necessity of acquiring new slaves to some extent, but as Meillassoux has argued, even when the freed offspring of slave women are taken into consideration, the birthrate was very low.¹¹ Slavery was simply not a self-sustaining institution through biological reproduction.

The external trade was an essential sector of this infrastructure. Not all slaves were captured with export in mind. Nonetheless, it was necessary that most slaves be moved a considerable distance from their point of enslavement. Here was a “push” factor in the economy that fed the export sector. Whether or not the external market provided a “pull” for slaves, there was an indigenous force that moved captives. When external demand influenced price, then it was only logical that the two factors should reinforce the flow of slaves from Africa. Once the link to the export market became established, and indeed while it continued to expand, the political economy invariably became more intimately connected with the export trade. The same logic suggests that the collapse of the external market would have equally profound effects on the internal slave system, as indeed has been shown in the preceding chapters.

In broad outline, this external trade included both the export of slaves to the Muslim countries outside black Africa and the shipment of slaves across the Atlantic to the Americas. Indeed, the development of the trans-Atlantic trade resulted in changes in the political economy of the Guinea coast, and the history of slavery in the different portions of that coast can only be understood in the context of the export trade. Indigenous institutions were either developed or modified to accommodate that trade, and the result was the evolution of distinctive slave systems that varied as much one from another as they differed from the type of slavery that predominated in the Muslim regions.

The recognition of the importance of the external market for slaves permits a fuller analysis of slavery during the period when the forces of abolition began to affect the nature of the institution. The abolition movement highlights the crucial impact of the external market in reverse. The collapse of that market and the extension of abolitionist doctrines presented a serious challenge to those social formations in which slavery was a major institution. The impact varied, and the form of change differed considerably, as outlined in the preceding chapters. Nonetheless, the transition from a slave mode of production to capitalism has involved fundamental structural changes in the social formation. The recognition that the nature of this transition involved a shift from a political economy based on slavery to one in which slavery withered away has considerable theoretical significance, as well as empirical accuracy. The mass escape of slaves, the colonial accommodation with slave owners, and the reluctance of the colonial regime to enforce abolition until the capitalist economy could absorb the labor released by emancipation all demonstrate this significance.

The association of slavery with the external trade clearly distinguishes my interpretation from that of many scholars who argue that the export sector had a marginal impact on African society and economy.¹² The threat of sale to merchants associated with the export trade was as important in the control of slaves as the fear of whipping was on the plantations of the Americas. The interaction between the external trade and the indigenous institution was a dialectical relationship. Both changed over time, and the influences of these changes flowed both ways, constantly producing a new situation in the two spheres. The long-term effects could be significant indeed, as a comparison between west-central Africa and the Islamic savanna reveals. Where women and children could be absorbed easily, as in the societies of west-central Africa, slavery remained associated with a mode of production based on kinship. Males were exported in disproportionate numbers, and women and children were placed in subordinate positions within a lineage. The means of production were not specifically associated with slavery, for most agricultural labor was the responsibility of women and children anyway. In the northern savanna, by contrast, the external market was for women and children, despite a domestic preference for these very same slaves. Unlike west-central Africa, the domestic market and the external market were in competition, and the value of male slaves was depressed accordingly. It was possible in this context to employ males in productive activities, thereby changing the organization of production. Another important difference directly related to the external trade was the scale of exported slaves, usually a steady but relatively modest stream for the northern savanna, but a more substantial movement from west-central Africa, particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This variation suggests that the pattern of slavery found in west-central Africa was reinforced and indeed extended farther into the interior, so that the use of slaves in productive capacities that required a fundamental shift in the social formation did not occur. During this same period, the northern savanna was relatively stable; the existing social formation continued to function as it had for centuries.

These generalizations help confirm the important role of the external trade, including the significance of the scale of exports, the link to the institutions of enslavement and trade, and the negative and positive associations of the trade with the political fragmentation of Africa. The numbers being traded help establish the scale of slavery in the domestic sector as well as the number of people actually taken from Africa – both the domestic population and the export population resulted from the same mechanisms of slave supply. This interrelationship was characteristic of the slave mode of production along the Guinea coast and other areas feeding the trans-Atlantic traffic in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, but the existence of the export trade was not necessary for the continued functioning of a slave mode of production, even though the rise of slave exports had contributed to the transformation of slavery.

The Transformation of Slavery

Slavery was transformed in Africa, to recount Finley's crucial distinction examined in Chapter 1,¹³ once slavery became an important component in production, particularly agriculture. Finley's insight accords well with Terray's discussion of a slave mode of production, for Terray, too, emphasizes the role of slaves in the productive process. I have expanded on Finley's notion, moreover, just as I have elaborated Terray's model. The transformations were many, and they often involved changes that affected production in the narrow sense that Finley describes. The origins and development of various plantation systems, the use of slaves in mining and handicrafts, and the employment of slaves in livestock breeding are all manifestations of this transformation of slavery into an instrument of production. Finley has indeed identified a crucial element in the reconstruction of slavery in African history. Slavery was transformed, and slave societies emerged. I have referred to this transformation in terms of the development of a social formation that incorporated a slave mode of production.

The transformations in slavery were more complex than the essential one identified by Finley, and the theoretical significance of this concept is particularly useful in distinguishing between the various kinds of changes that occurred in the history of slavery in Africa. The emphasis on transformations helps identify important factors in the evolution of slavery, including changes in the external market, different responses to export demand, and particular adjustments in the availability of slaves for domestic assignment. Slavery could be transformed into a productive institution, but the social formation itself could be transformed in different ways in conjunction with the development of slavery.

In order to consider these transformations, it is necessary to distinguish once again between the three sectors of the African slave system: the process of enslavement, the mechanism of slave distribution, and the role of slaves in the social formation. The history of slavery in Africa reveals transformations in each of these sectors, sometimes individually and sometimes in combination. These differences become clearer when various regions of Africa are contrasted. In west-central Africa, institutions of enslavement and trade developed that resulted in fundamental changes to the structure of the political economy. The region became a source of supply for the trans-Atlantic trade, and slavery was transformed into a productive institution in scattered enclaves close to the slave supply system. Slaves were used in production, based on a sexual division of labor that characterized the organization of work among lineage members – that is, women did most of the agricultural labor anyway; hence the acquisition of women enabled men to combine their desires for labor, sexual access, and children. Slavery became essential to production, so that the kind of transformation that Finley identifies as crucial in the development of a slave society took place. Slavery was central to the social formation. Slaves were an

item of export, and enslavement was a means of social control in a political system based on tributary relationships between a military elite and dependent lineages. Within this system, slavery filled a variety of functions, including military conscription, portage in long-distance trade, marriage, and funeral sacrifices. The transformation in the productive process followed the transformation in enslavement and trade. Here the dominant mode of production was based on the extraction of tribute, often in the form of slaves. Tribute collection involving slaves was also prevalent along the West African coast and in the northern savanna, where slavery clearly assumed a productive dimension as well.

Along the Congo River and in the Niger delta, the most significant transformation was in the relationship between slavery and the commercial infrastructure. Slaves were incorporated into the firms of merchants, and activities directly related to enslavement and production developed thereafter. This transformation of slavery was connected with the export trade in slaves. Again there was a structural change in slavery, with slaves increasingly used in production. In these commercial situations, slaves were crucial to the social formation, because the incorporation of slaves was essential to the operation of business. Slave labor was directly related to the consolidation of the commercial infrastructure that was necessary for the export of slaves. Parallels can be found in the use of slaves as porters and stock boys along the caravan routes of the interior. The use of slaves in commerce was connected to the distribution of other goods too.

For purposes of analysis, it is important to isolate the use of slaves in military service, and hence as an agency in the enslavement process, from the employment of slaves in production. In the military, slaves were not used for productive purposes, except in the sense that soldiers “produced” slaves through wars and raids.¹⁴ The incorporation of slaves into the army was, therefore, essential to the perpetuation of slavery as an institution, but the transformation was related to control over productive activities that followed changes in commercial organization and kinship relationships.

The maintenance of the trans-Saharan, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean trade in slaves, the development of the trans-Atlantic trade, and the abolition of each of these trades involved transformations in the mechanisms of slave supply as Africa first became linked to an international system of slavery and then later was severed from external markets. The establishment of this structure facilitated the emergence of a slave mode of production within Africa. Clearly this transformation required transformations in the supply mechanism whereby people were enslaved.

The international system of slavery that developed after the sixteenth century had its African and non-African parts; it was not confined to the African continent. If west-central Africa is examined in isolation from the Americas, then it might appear that only a partial transformation took place, but if the mechanisms of slave supply are attached to the receiving area for the slaves,

then a full transformation can be perceived. Thus west-central Africa must be seen in conjunction with the development of plantation slavery in the Americas, where slavery was the basis of production but where the institutions of enslavement were often not present, except with respect to the enslavement of the Amerindian population in different periods. Taken together, this sophisticated slave mode of production was separated into distinct parts – enslavement was mostly confined in Africa, whereas productive slavery was concentrated in the Americas – and a mechanism of slave distribution connected the two sectors. Once the forces of abolition began to sever the link in this intercontinental system, slavery was confined to an African context. The separation encouraged developments closer to areas of enslavement, with slaves taken to São Thomé and Príncipe, scattered places along the Angolan coast, and the Arab-Swahili plantations of Zanzibar, Pemba, and the east coast. This transformation presaged the collapse of slavery as an integrated system, for the emancipation of slaves in these locations eliminated the need for continued enslavement to supply them. Those areas where slavery had not been transformed into a productive institution lost the crucial function of supplying slaves. Elsewhere, the separation between slave supply and the use of slaves in production was far less, and it is possible, therefore, to examine the interaction between the separate sectors in the same social formation.

Articulation with Capitalism

In the nineteenth century, slavery was harnessed to capitalism. The pressure on the external trade forced the redirection of slaves within Africa on an unprecedented scale. Commercial expansion resulted in the employment of slaves in trade and production; now Africa internalized slavery as a mode of production, whereas previously African slavery had been part of a larger, intercontinental network. This intensification of slavery, reflected in the vehemence of European antislavery rhetoric, presaged the collapse of slavery as a mode of production in the twentieth century. Conflict was inevitable because the economic interests of Europe, the pressure of abolitionists in the missions and the popular press, and the rivalries of European governments that spilled over into the tropical world eventually undermined slavery. European merchants cooperated with their African counterparts – who were the largest slave owners – when times were prosperous, but during the series of economic crises at the end of the nineteenth century, European firms moved to bypass their African intermediaries to cut costs and increase profits. As African merchants and producers found themselves hard pressed, they demanded more from their slaves. Abolitionists, even when in favor of reform and not immediate emancipation, spread dangerous propaganda among slaves. Even though their missions were little more than symbols of freedom – the actual numbers of fugitives and ex-slaves at the missions were relatively small when compared with the total slave population – African catechists spread the subversive doctrines of freedom and conversion.

It took European colonial expansion to provide slaves with the opportunity to escape. During the chaos of conquest, law and order temporarily broke down; slave masters who had opposed European expansion were in no position to assert their authority over their slaves, and the new colonial regimes could not prevent individuals and small groups from leaving.

This process of intensified slave use and then the collapse of slavery reveals a wider phenomenon: the articulation of a slave mode of production with capitalism. This articulation began with the incorporation of the Guinea coast into the southern Atlantic system of slave supply for the Americas. Africa was invariably tied to the Americas until this supply function was terminated in the nineteenth century; hence developments in slavery along the Guinea coast were subordinate to the emergence of productive slavery in the Americas. Commercial links with Europe and India demonstrate the extent of this involvement, but the nature of the exchange in itself served as a barrier to the transfer of capitalism to Africa. At the height of the slave trade in the eighteenth century, Europe, the Americas, and Africa formed three distinct sectors of the world economy; capitalism emerged triumphant only in Europe, whereas the Americas and Africa remained subordinate partners.

This subordination shaped slavery in the Americas – which many scholars have recognized – but it also shaped slavery in Africa, at least in those parts of Africa catering to the export trade.¹⁵ In this case, slavery developed within the context of slave supply: the retention of greater numbers of women and children, the use of slaves in the military, and the employment of slaves in production related to the maintenance of a class of merchants and warlords who were essential to the functioning of an international system of slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This interaction continued into the nineteenth century; only the abolition crusade increasingly hampered the ability to supply slaves.

The strongest economic forces in the nineteenth century were capitalist – the expansion of world markets for “legitimate” commodities. The growth of the market for oils, ivory, ostrich feathers, and other goods – some for luxury consumption associated with European prosperity and others for the industry that characterized the capitalist order – provided a ready outlet for slave labor. Masters assigned their slaves to the production of export commodities, although production for household consumption and regional markets continued as before, as did the continued use of slaves in noneconomic functions. Hence the transformation was more relative than absolute. Slaves were already used in economic capacities; now more slaves were so employed. Older forms of slavery associated with slave supply – military position, administrative appointment, commercial agency – were still important because it was still necessary to supply slaves for the African market, but the relative importance of these functions declined in comparison with the productive employment of slaves.

The emergence of a slave mode of production in Africa was very different from the development of the slave systems of the Americas, despite the fact

that both were subordinate to capitalism and ultimately associated with the consolidation of capitalism. In the American context, slavery was introduced from outside and always relied on the importation of slaves and the continued identification of masters with Europe. In Africa, slavery evolved from indigenous institutions, and, except for the relatively small plantation sector in central, eastern, and southern Africa that was controlled by European immigrants, slave owners were also Africans. Furthermore, the African social formation always included an important – often dominant – regional orientation, whereas the Americas were more closely integrated with the world market than Africa, and the regional economy was comparatively unimportant. The reliance on race as a method of social control was also peculiarly a feature of slavery in the Americas, although African slave owners established their own methods of domination. These and other differences are crucial in distinguishing the form of slavery.

There were significant variations in slavery as a mode of production in different parts of Africa too. Plantation slavery was most widespread in the northern savanna, where religious motivation had been successfully channeled to justify the economic exploitation of captives. Regional economies were by far more important than the export sector, except for the Senegambia area. Hence the articulation between slavery and capitalism was weakest in the northern savanna, even though the number of slaves was greatest. Along the West African coast, slavery was a significant factor in production, although in the Igbo-Ibibio palm-oil belt – the largest source of palm products – slavery was not as important as elsewhere along the West African coast. It is clear from these variations that the dominance of slavery was not a requirement for the integration into the world economy. Local factors had a strong influence on the role slavery played. Where state structures were particularly centralized, as on the Gold Coast and in the Bight of Benin interior, slaves were more numerous than in the Biafra hinterland, which lacked centralized states. Finally, in southern, central, and eastern Africa, the external enclaves relied on slavery to produce commodities for the market, whereas there were virtually no foreign enclaves that relied on slavery elsewhere (in the Turco-Egyptian Sudan, the indigenous slave owners dominated production; the colonial state was not a major factor in production). The articulation of slavery with capitalism was more pronounced in these enclaves than anywhere else, but the expansion of these enclaves was relatively limited. Except for a few places along trade routes, slavery remained incompletely transformed in most of the interior.

Other forms of labor – share cropping, migrant labor, pawning – existed alongside slavery in the nineteenth century, and these forms of labor were often associated with slavery. This association can be demonstrated with reference to four examples. Senegambian migrant farmers were sometimes slaves, and whether slave or free, they – or their masters – had access to land through the payment of 10 percent of their peanut harvests to their landlords, who were usually the largest slave owners employing slaves on their own.¹⁶ The leasing of

slaves on the Gold Coast and elsewhere solved a bottleneck in the movement of labor from those who had excess manpower to those who needed temporary workers, such as European commercial firms, but the slaves did not have control over their earnings.¹⁷ Migrant labor became important in South Africa in the 1870s; some migrants were slaves by origin, but many were free men who were able to seek employment on European farms and in the new mines of Kimberley because slaves were employed in domestic tasks back home.¹⁸ Pawnage – which already shared center stage with slavery – had become a source of slaves when customary laws were ignored, but in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth century, pawnage assumed a new importance as a method of labor mobilization. The incidence of pawnage actually increased as slavery began to die, at least in Yorubaland, the middle Niger valley, and perhaps Asante.¹⁹ The erosion of slavery as a mode of production freed these alternative forms of labor, which in one way or another marked the transition to a more complete articulation with capitalism. The transformation of these forms occurred under colonialism.²⁰

The conquest of Africa and the extension of European economic domination proceeded together under the banner of antislavery. As has been demonstrated, however, the antislavery cause was a reluctant one, seldom providing the motivation for European economic or political action. Nonetheless, as an ideology, the antislavery rhetoric of missionaries and reformers provided a rationale for expansion that was logically connected with the progression of capitalism and imperialism.²¹ The literature of nineteenth-century missionaries, explorers, diplomats, and reconnaissance officers maintained the antislavery cause. Such authors as Buxton, Schoelcher, André, Berlioux, and Lacour wrote books specifically on the slavery issue, whereas the antislavery movement of *Lavigerie* and the various societies for suppression of slavery played an active role in promoting expansion by justifying intervention in the name of abolition.²² Although missionaries and colonial officials in Africa were usually more cautious, political expediency and safety dictated a gradualist policy anyway. Slavery was an explosive issue best left alone, despite its value for propaganda.

Nonetheless, the ideology of antislavery was an accurate indicator of larger changes that were inevitable, and as such the observations and aims of reformers and reactionaries alike reveal changes that were taking place, often against the wishes of the observers themselves. The flight of slaves, the hiring of slaves to secure a wage-labor force, reforms imposed on local practice to appease the abolitionist movement, and other developments were important steps in undermining slavery as an institution. The rhetoric influenced the nature of social change and thereby contributed to the transition from a social formation in which slavery was important to the peripheral capitalism of the colonial era.

The imposition of colonialism terminated slavery as a mode of production and marked the fuller integration of Africa into the orbit of capitalism. Imperialism used the rhetoric of antislavery, but the crucial developments

involved military expansion and the commercial supremacy of European firms in Africa. Even though Africa remained on the periphery of capitalism, the colonial dictatorship nonetheless facilitated the final transformation of slavery – the slave mode of production was dismantled by ending the major forms of enslavement and curtailing most slave trading. Kidnapping and smuggling continued for several decades – and still continues on a small scale in a few places – but slave raiding, warfare, and public slave marketing ceased virtually everywhere by the first decade of colonial rule. Because of the essential functions of enslavement and trade in the maintenance of the slave population, the curtailment of these activities resulted in a rapid decline in the number of slaves. The flight of slaves and reformed emancipation procedures also reduced the slave population, so that kidnapping, slave smuggling, and the birth of children to slave parents whose servile status was retained could not sustain slavery as a mode of production. European administrators could afford to accommodate slave masters in the interests of social stability because the abolition of slavery was on an irreversible course.

Africa remained peripheral to capitalism, even as slavery was disassembled. The new forms of labor organization – migration, peasant production, colonial coercion through taxation and *corvée* projects, and military conscription – were associated with the colonial dictatorship.²³ By the time anthropologists and historians concentrated on studying slavery, only the legacy of a slave mode could be found.

The Legacy of Slavery

When slavery has been a central institution in society, its legacy lives on, and with it problems confronting Africa. Reports of kidnapped children, young girls taken to Mecca as “pilgrims” but who end up in harems, and the insistence of some old men that they are still slaves because of the status and benefits that such an assertion still holds, attest to this legacy.²⁴ Now, however, there is no institution of slavery, despite the evidence for individual cases of slavery that persist into the twentieth-first century. By the 1930s, abolition was well on its way to becoming an accomplished fact virtually everywhere. Even when slaves were not formally emancipated or locally were not recognized as free, the social and political setting had changed irrevocably.

Within Africa, the legacy has often been apparent, although issues of the past are now disguised under new labels. Differences between Muslims and Christians can well relate to who was raiding whom for slaves, a division revealed to me in the mid-1970s when university students began to argue among themselves over the historical significance of this religious difference.²⁵ Many questions about this legacy are being examined in the course of current research, particularly the relationship of slave ancestry to migrant labor, the movement of people to the towns and cities, ethnic identification, as well as religious conversion. These and related topics are beyond the scope of this book.

One aspect of the history of slavery and abolition should be readily apparent. Those who focus on slavery in the Americas without reference to slavery in Africa have neglected a major problem in the history of Africans. Africans experienced slavery not only in the Americas but also in Africa. Furthermore, emancipation came much later in Africa. To concentrate on the struggle for freedom in the United States, the West Indies, or other parts of the Americas without recognizing the plight of slaves in Africa introduces a major distortion into our understanding of slave history. The emergence of an international system of slavery tied the Americas and Africa together, just as the earlier history of slavery in Muslim countries had drawn some parts of Africa into the Islamic orbit of North Africa and the Indian Ocean. The disassembly of that international system required more than the freeing of slaves in the Americas, and the legacy of oppression and racism in the Americas is only one aspect of the tragic heritage of slavery.

In the African context, the legacy of slavery has been so enormous that it has only recently become obvious. To focus on specific historical and cultural problems, scholars failed to recognize or blurred the larger issue of social organization until recently, whether they were conscious of this distortion or not. The colonial dictatorship, the role of the international economy, the racial dimension involved in the relationships between Europeans and Africans, the struggle for political independence, the consolidation of military rule, the revolutionary struggle in southern Africa, and other topics have to be analyzed in a historical framework that draws on dependency theory, Marxist analysis, and the interdisciplinary interaction between anthropology, economics, political science, sociology, and history. Cooper's early work was an important exception until recently; most scholars concerned with the development of a labor force in the colonial and postcolonial periods did not usually realize the importance of slave labor in the precolonial era. Yet it is now clear that the transition to colonial rule and political independence occurred in the context of the collapse of slavery.²⁶ The degree to which this transition marked a major departure in history is still being analyzed. Where old elites survived, despite the turmoil of the colonial years, the transition was less abrupt. Where the old elite was eliminated, slaves could sometimes assert themselves sooner and more fully. Nonetheless, the question is not whether or not there was a dramatic break with the past, but the ways in which people were able to shape the new order – preserving the old or rising above it. Much colonial and postcolonial scholarship now has the problem of abolition in mind.

On the political level, biographical studies have established the ancestry of the African leaders of the past eighty years. How many are of slave descent? How were they able to rise above the handicap? Are there any patterns in the policies that individuals of various backgrounds have pursued? With a military heritage involving the recruitment of fugitive slaves into the colonial armies, it might well prove important to examine the backgrounds of subsequent military

personnel, again checking for a link with the slave past, not only the colonial regimes of dictatorship.

The concentration on economic relationships and changing forms of dependency has tended to focus on the role of African entrepreneurship in social transformation and the impact of the world economy on a technologically backward continent. This orientation has resulted in the accumulation of considerable knowledge of foreign firms and their means of domination. The extent to which African merchants, farmers, and workers have been able to resist or adjust to this adverse situation has led to considerable understanding of class formation and ethnic stratification. The correspondence between these developments and the legacy of slavery is now recognized as crucial to our understanding of African history. Because slavery was such a crucial dimension of the past, the colonial economy and society marked a major transformation of the precolonial economic order – a process of change that is still being analyzed.

Epilogue

The transformations in slavery that have been examined in this book have highlighted the centrality of historical change in Africa. It has been argued that the transformations were in response to external influence, both from the Atlantic world and from the countries of Islam, as well as the internal dynamics of African societies. In emphasizing “transformations,” this study has demonstrated the pervasiveness of slavery in African history and the significance of the transition that occurred under colonialism. As argued, the idea of this centrality can be encapsulated in the concept of “mode of production” that places enslavement, the trade in slaves, and the use of slaves in productive activities in articulation with each other. The significance of ending institutionalized enslavement and trade under colonialism is thereby highlighted. Slavery was not abolished outright but rather allowed to disappear gradually through the criminalization of enslavement and trafficking in humans, but not the emancipation of slaves. Those born under colonial rule were declared to be born free. Hence slavery was undermined as an institution; the “mode of production” linking enslavement, slave trading, and the use of slaves was broken. Although colonial officials referred to the “natural” death of the institution, slavery did not end.

Historically, intercontinental slavery was transformative in the countries and places that received enslaved Africans, both the Americas and the Islamic world. In the Atlantic world, slavery became the basis of a labor system associated with European expansion and colonization. It can be said that slavery was a means of peopling new lands that were being developed as colonies of European imperialism. In this sense, enslavement and transport brought Africans into a colonial world, albeit in almost all cases outside of Africa. The transformations of slavery in Africa evolved as a form of colonialism, in which enslaved Africans become the population of the European colonies of the Americas.

A similar population resettlement influenced the course of change in the Islamic states and empires, both within Africa and beyond. Africa became one of the frontiers from which Islamic societies organized forced immigration and assimilation of non-Muslims. Whether in North Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, or within Africa, this reliance on slavery can also be considered a colonial project, although different from European settlement of their colonies in the Americas. For the Islamic states and empires, whether the Ottoman Porte, the Sokoto Caliphate, or others, slavery was a means of bringing non-Muslims populations under the political control of the state and the influence of conversion.

Historically, Africa has witnessed a steady, if varied, drain in population – an outward emigration that was forced and that was not matched by an influx of population of comparable numbers, except perhaps in South Africa. The impact of this demographic loss has to have been considerable. The multidirectional migration out of Africa, both to the Americas and to the Islamic lands of North Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean, lasted for hundreds of years before c. 1900, and largely was a consequence of slavery. There was no comparable immigration of people to Africa. Even though commercial outposts and an embryonic plantation economy were established in some places, the net demographic movement was out of Africa. Much of its young and productive population left the continent, whereas a significant number of people died in wars and raids that involved enslavement, or in famines that followed political upheaval. This demographic profile shaped the transformations that occurred in the different regions of Africa since the fifteenth century at least. Moreover, because of the long-term impact of the enslaved migration, some parts of Africa were closely associated with specific places in the Americas. The close link between Brazil and Angola comes to mind, whereas the consolidation of Islamic states, such as the Ottoman Porte, relied on frontiers from where enslaved people came. Large parts of Africa were thereby demarcated. Hence, the history of Africa after c. 1500 cannot be disentangled from the history of the circum Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, and the central Islamic lands.

In the twentieth century, colonial officials and anthropologists, often government-appointed, discovered that slavery was widespread almost everywhere in Africa. Despite efforts sometimes to describe “slavery” as something different from slavery elsewhere in European colonies, especially slavery in the Americas, it was clear to all that slavery continued, in modified and reshaped forms, in many places.¹ That the trade in Islamic regions persisted and, indeed, that its frequency even increased in some locations indicates that colonial policy was far from effective. The emancipation of slaves often occurred because individuals took action themselves. Despite political motivations underlying the reports of the League of Nations in the 1920s and 1930s, slavery was still widespread, to such an extent that some colonial regimes tried to cover up its presence. British administrator, Lord Frederick Lugard, who served in Uganda and most notably in Nigeria, phrased the transition the “slow death” of slavery,

which was expected to last the whole of the twentieth century.² Despite the massive desertion of slaves at the time of the European colonial conquest, Lord Lugard has been proven right. Slavery has persisted, even if its legality has been ended.

More recently, since the independence of African countries in the 1960s and 1970s, slavery has become largely a subterranean force, no longer legal in most countries but continuing in various contexts, just as slavery has persisted elsewhere in the world. Some countries that include territory in the Sahara, such as Mauretania, Niger, and elsewhere, have been particularly reticent in ending slavery, and when slavery has been suppressed, dependent relationships arising from former servitude have persisted, limiting the access of the descendants of slaves to land and other resources.³ Moreover, in some cocoa-producing areas, such as Côte d'Ivoire, children have been enslaved to harvest crops.⁴ In some Muslim areas, such as Niger and northern Nigeria, the continuation of concubinage has also sustained the demand for enslaved women. These contemporary issues highlight the continuation of slavery in Africa well into the twentieth century, despite apparent colonial and postcolonial efforts to undermine and eliminate the institution. In these cases, the trade in enslaved children and women is illegal, but impossible to suppress.

Today, we know more about the origins of enslaved Africans who went to the Americas and to various parts of the Muslim world than ever before. Moreover, the relationship of slavery to the history of Africa, and the factors that made possible the establishment of identifiable communities of enslaved Africans in the Americas, and indeed in North Africa, the Sahara, and in West Africa itself, is much more clearly understood. As everywhere, slaves in Africa resisted their bondage as best they could. The methods of trade and marketing, either by Muslims or non-Muslims, and the impact of slavery on society and economy more generally are major themes in the reconstruction of the African past. That trans-Atlantic slavery was indeed devastating for many parts of Africa is clear.

Migration through slavery reveals a legacy of violence and insecurity that has punctuated the African past. Domestically, there were transformations as a result of population loss in specific places and at specific times through loss of life associated with wars and enslavement. There were adjustments in social, religious, and communal life that can be identified as responses to and protection from slavery. The formation of an African diaspora in the Islamic world and the Americas each in themselves represents the legacy of slavery, as is the continuing history in Africa of ethnic and religious strife, and indeed achievement, under colonialism and in the period of independence since then. Slavery has survived. Distinctions arising from an association with slavery have continued through the colonial and postcolonial eras into contemporary times. A preoccupation with trans-Atlantic slavery or the African diaspora in the Americas risks losing perspective on the long trajectory of slavery in Africa and indeed the Indian Ocean. The arrival of Africans in the Islamic world and the

Americas definitely affected economic and social development. This book has intended to provide an introduction to the study of slavery in African history. From an African perspective, such a study includes the history of the victims of slavery and where they were taken and how they were able to retain memories and sometimes direct connections with the homeland.

Contemporary slavery differs from the slavery of the past because of its illegality.⁵ We all understand how enslavement differed over time and depending on location, but for anyone who is enslaved, such subtle scholarly distinctions hardly matter. The voices of those who are enslaved are often silenced. What we have to accept is that slavery has not been abolished in the world today, but it must be. The continuity in practices of servility in West Africa is a legacy, different from the legacy of the Americas, but no less real for the people who are affected. We have to increase the level of awareness among scholars, and indeed the public at large, about the differences and similarities in the experiences and conditions of the enslaved through history. We have to close the gap in knowledge dissemination to restore the dignity of peoples who have suffered the experience and legacy of slavery.

Appendix: Chronology of Measures against Slavery

- 1772 Lord Mansfield's decision: Slaves become free upon entering the British Isles, thus making it illegal to repossess fugitive slaves.
- 1780 Pennsylvania passes act for the gradual abolition of slavery.
- 1783 The Society of Friends (England) forms an antislavery association for the relief of slaves and the discouragement of the slave trade.
- 1783 Massachusetts declares slavery illegal.
- 1787 The Abolition Society of Samuel Wilberforce founds Freetown, Sierra Leone, as a home for liberated slaves.
- 1788 Dolben Act regulates British slave trade.
- 1789 British Parliament debates the abolition of the slave trade.
- 1791 Slaves rebel on the French island of Saint Domingue. The last European forces are evacuated in 1798, and the independent, black government of Haiti is established.
- 1791 First U.S. measures abolishing the slave trade.
- 1792 Denmark declares its intention to abolish the slave trade.
- 1794 French Republic abolishes slavery (subsequently revoked by Napoleon, 1802).
- 1799 The Church Missionary Society (England) is founded to pursue humanitarian aims in Africa, including the fight against the slave trade.
- 1803 Denmark abolishes the slave trade.
- 1804 Haiti recognized as independent country, abolishes slavery.
- 1805 British Order-in-Council restricts the import of slaves into colonies captured from France and Holland (Le., since 1802).
- 1806 Act of Parliament prohibits British participation in the slave trade to foreign territories, effectively outlawing two-thirds of the British trade.

- 1807 The Abolition Act prohibits all British subjects from participation in the slave trade as of January 1, 1808. A naval squadron that eventually reaches one-sixth of the total strength of the Royal Navy is dispatched to blockade the West African coast.
- 1808 Sierra Leone becomes a British colony and a center of antislave trade activities.
- 1808 The United States abolishes slave trade.
- 1810 Anglo-Portuguese treaty whereby Portugal agrees to restrict its slave trade to its own colonies.
- 1811 Parliament strengthens the Abolition Act by declaring that British subjects engaged in the slave trade are to be considered pirates.
- 1813 Anglo-Swedish treaty whereby Sweden outlaws the slave trade.
- 1814 The Treaty of Paris: France and Britain agree that the slave trade is “repugnant to the principles of natural justice.” France agrees to limit its trade to its own colonies and to abolish the trade in five years.
- 1814 Anglo-Netherlands treaty whereby the latter outlaws the slave trade.
- 1814 Anglo-Spanish treaty whereby Spain limits its slave trade to its own colonies and prohibits the trade north of the equator after 1817 and south of the equator after 1820 in return for £400,000 in compensation.
- 1815 Anglo-Portuguese treaty whereby Portugal agrees to limit its slave trade to its possessions south of the equator. In return, Britain waives Portugal’s war debt of £450,000.
- 1815 Congress of Vienna: Britain, France, Prussia, Russia, Portugal, Spain, Austria, and Sweden condemn the slave trade as “repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality.”
- 1817 British convention with Portugal limits the Portuguese slave trade in East Africa to an area from Cape Delgado to the Bay of Lourenco Marques. Portugal also concedes visit-and-search rights on Portuguese ships suspected of violating this and other agreements.
- 1817 British treaty with Imerina prohibits the export of slaves from Madagascar in return for compensation of £2,000 per year. Imerina outlaws slave raiding in the Comoro Islands on penalty of being reduced to slavery.
- 1817 Anglo-Spanish treaty grants Britain the right to detain Spanish ships.
- 1818 France outlaws the slave trade.
- 1820 British treaty with Imerina is extended.
- 1820–5 Slavery is outlawed throughout the newly independent Spanish countries of Latin America.
- 1821 Slave imports into Cuba become illegal, although the effect is minimal.
- 1822 The American Colonization Society establishes Liberia as a home for liberated American slaves.

- 1822 Moresby Treaty between Britain and Muscat prohibits the export of slaves by Europeans in East Africa and establishes a British observer at Zanzibar. Britain recognizes Omani claims in East Africa, including the existence of slavery.
- 1823 A third treaty with Imerina whereby Britain is authorized to seize slavers; it also provides for the resettlement of liberated slaves.
- 1823 Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions is founded.
- 1824 Establishment of British protectorate over Mombasa with intention to restrict slave trade; protectorate terminates in 1826 under Zanzibar pressure.
- 1825 Hugh Clapperton and Dixon Denham negotiate treaties with the Sokoto Caliphate and Borno to end slave exports in return for trade in European goods.
- 1826 Newly independent Brazil accepts Portugal's treaty obligations with Britain and promises to abolish the slave trade in three years.
- 1829 Mexico abolishes slavery.
- 1831 Anglo-French treaty provides for mutual, limited right to search vessels suspected of carrying slaves.
- 1831 Brazil officially abolishes slave trade.
- 1833 Britain emancipates slaves in its West Indian colonies, South Africa, and Mauritius, with compensation to slave owners; emancipation takes effect on August 1, 1834, although a system of apprenticeship lasts for four years in some colonies.
- 1835 Anglo-Spanish treaty for condemnation of slave ships.
- 1836 Portugal abolishes slave trade.
- 1838 Thomas F. Buxton launches a campaign against slavery, advocating free trade and the colonization of the African interior with freed, Christian slaves. Buxton's efforts result in the strengthening of the British naval squadron off the West African coast and the signing of antislave trade treaties with African states.
- 1839 Convention between Oman (Zanzibar) and Britain, which extends rights of search and seizure.
- 1839 Joseph Sturge founds the British Anti-Slavery Society.
- 1839 Buxton establishes the African Civilization Society as part of his abolition campaign.
- 1841 The British Aborigines' Protection Society is founded in England.
- 1841 Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia agree to extend rights of search and seizure to halt the slave trade, although France refuses to ratify the treaty.
- 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty: Britain and the United States agree to maintain a naval force of at least eighty guns off the African coast as part of a joint commitment to suppress the slave trade.

- 1843 The legal status of slavery is abolished in India and elsewhere, although slaves are not emancipated.
- 1843 France initiates *engage* or “free labor” emigration in its colonial possessions to circumvent antislavery treaties.
- 1844 Britain signs treaty with Sultanate of Anjouin (Comoro Islands) to prevent French recruitment of *engage* labor.
- 1845 Anglo-French treaty: Both powers agree to maintain at least twenty-six cruisers off the African coast as an antislave-trade force; rights of search and seizure are abrogated. France does not adhere to the treaty, which is allowed to expire after ten years.
- 1845 British treaty with Oman (Zanzibar): Slave trade is restricted to Oman’s possessions in Arabia and East Africa; Britain secures the right of search and seizure.
- 1846 Tunisia abolishes the slave trade to gain British support against the Ottoman Empire.
- 1847 The Ottoman Empire prohibits the slave trade in the Persian Gulf and closes public slave markets in Constantinople.
- 1847 Liberia becomes an independent republic.
- 1848 Persia bans the maritime slave trade.
- 1848 France emancipates slaves in its colonies.
- 1849 French preventative squadron off the West African coast is reduced.
- 1849 France establishes Libreville, Gabon, as a settlement for freed slaves.
- 1849 Establishment of British consuls and agents in West Africa to supervise treaty obligations, including antislave trade provisions. Royal Navy squadron is strengthened.
- 1850 Brazil enforces slave trade abolition.
- 1851 Britain deposes the ruler of Lagos for his refusal to take action against the slave trade. Antislave trade treaties are signed with Lagos, Dahomey, Porto Novo, Badagry, and Abeokuta.
- 1851 Anglo-Persian treaty grants Britain right of search and seizure.
- 1854 Portugal decrees that slaves in its territories are *libertos*.
- 1854 Egypt bans public slave markets, although trade continues in private.
- 1854 The Ottoman Empire prohibits the white slave trade.
- 1855 First of several treaties with principalities on the Red Sea coast that grant right of search and seizure to Britain; official appointed to Berbera.
- 1857 The Ottoman Empire prohibits the slave trade in its domains, although the decree is not enforced.
- 1859 France abolishes the *engage* system, although enforcement is not strict.
- 1861 The Canning Award: Zanzibar and Oman are separated, thereby setting the stage for the further suppression of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean.

- 1862 Treaty of Washington: The United States grants Britain the right of search and seizure.
- 1865 Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolishes slavery.
- 1865 British treaty with Imerina whereby Imerina prohibits the importation of slaves.
- 1867 Cuba ends slave trade.
- 1869 The Royal Navy begins intensive patrolling against Arab slave trade.
- 1869 Portugal abolishes slavery.
- 1870 Ownership of slaves becomes illegal in India.
- 1873 Kirk-Barghash treaty: Zanzibar bans public slave markets and promises to protect liberated slaves.
- 1874 Proclamation for the emancipation of slaves on the Gold Coast, following the British defeat of Asante.
- 1875 British treaty with Tunisia confirming abolition of slavery and the slave trade. Annexation subsequently revoked.
- 1876 France incorporates Walo and Dimar into Senegal, thereby abolishing slavery.
- 1876 British Royal Commission investigates the treatment of fugitive slaves in East Africa but opposes asylum for fugitives except in cases of physical danger.
- 1877 Anglo-Egyptian treaty prohibits the import, export, and transit of slaves in Egypt; domestic slavery to be outlawed by 1884 in Egypt and 1889 in the Nilotic Sudan.
- 1877 Britain undertakes to reorganize the Zanzibar army to combat the slave trade in the interior.
- 1877 Imerina declares all slaves from Mozambique free.
- 1878 Portugal abolishes legal status of slavery.
- 1880 Anglo-Ottoman Convention reaffirms the prohibition of the slave trade and grants Britain rights of search.
- 1882 Colonel Charles Gordon, seeking to check the Mahdist rebellion, rescinds the law banning the slave trade in the Nilotic Sudan.
- 1883 Morocco rejects the “friendly appeal” of the British Foreign Office for the abolition of slavery.
- 1883 The African Department of the British Foreign Office replaces the Slave Trade Department as the era of “moral temporizing” ends.
- 1883 Britain assigns four traveling consuls to East Africa to replace naval action against the slave trade.
- 1884 France and Britain forbid employees and *proteges* in Morocco to own slaves.
- 1884 British treaty with Ethiopia grants Ethiopia access to the Red Sea through Massawa on a condition that slave trade ends in the interior.

- 1885 Berlin Conference: Britain, France, Austria, Germany, Russia, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, Italy, the Ottoman Empire, Sweden, Denmark, and the United States agree to “help in suppressing slavery,” although no direct measures are taken against the slave trade in Africa.
- 1888 Brazil becomes the last American country to abolish slavery.
- 1888 Cardinal Lavigerie inaugurates a campaign against the slave trade in central Africa, thereby revitalizing the humanitarian cause in Britain and Europe.
- 1888 Imperial British East Africa Company pays more than £3,000 compensation for 1,400 fugitive slaves at the CMS mission stations near Mombasa.
- 1888 Germany, Britain, and Italy blockade the coast of Zanzibar, ostensibly to suppress the slave trade.
- 1889 Zanzibar grants the British and Germans perpetual right of search, decrees that new slaves entering its domains after November 1, 1889 shall be free, and provides for the emancipation of all slave children born after January 1, 1890.
- 1889 Brussels Conference: The participants of the Berlin Conference, plus Persia, Zanzibar, and the Congo Free State, condemn slavery and the slave trade. Bureaux are established in Brussels and Zanzibar to collate and disseminate information on the slave trade.
- 1892 Convention between France and the independent states of Senegal in which slaves are recognized as servants; French courts grant certificates of liberty to those slaves buying their freedom.
- 1893 Renwell Rodd’s report to the British parliament recommending the gradual abolition of the slave trade in East Africa.
- 1894 British emancipation ordinance in the Gambia for gradual termination of slavery; slaves to be free at death of master or payment of £10 (adults) or £5 (children).
- 1896 Legal status of slavery abolished in Sierra Leone.
- 1897 Legal status of slavery abolished in Zanzibar.
- 1897 Slavery is abolished in Madagascar, following the French invasion of Imerina in 1895.
- 1899 Joint deputation of Quakers and the Anti-Slavery Society meets with the British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs to demand emancipation of slaves in Africa.
- 1900 Britain abolishes the legal status of slavery in the occupied parts of Nigeria with the intention of extending the decree throughout Nigeria.
- 1909 Institution of slavery abolished in Zanzibar.
- 1919 Treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye: The Allies limit (but do not prohibit) the slave trade in Africa. The signatories pledge to “secure the

- complete suppression of slavery in all its forms and of the slave trade by land and sea.”
- 1926 Forty-four countries ratify the slavery convention of the League of Nations.
- 1928 Institution of slavery is abolished in Sierra Leone.
- 1930 League of Nations’ prohibition of slavery is extended to include all forms of forced labor.
- 1936 League of Nations establishes a Permanent Advisory Committee on the suppression of the slave trade.
- 1942 Legal status of slavery is abolished in Ethiopia.
- 1962 Saudi Arabia becomes the last country to abolish the legal status of slavery.

Notes

Preface to the Second Edition

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2. Ivana Elbl, "The volume of the early Atlantic slave trade, 1450–1521," *Journal of African History*, 38 (1997), 31–75.
3. Paul E. Lovejoy, "The volume of the Atlantic slave trade: a synthesis," *Journal of African History* 22:4 (1982), 473–501; Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Lovejoy, "The impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa: a review of the literature," *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), 365–94; Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society. The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim: University of Trondheim Press, 1995), 133–71.
4. David Henige, "Measuring the immeasurable: the Atlantic slave trade, West African population and the Pyrrhonian critic," *Journal of African History* 27 (1986), 295–313; and J. E. Inikori, "Slavery in Africa and the transatlantic slave trade," in Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (eds.), *The African Diaspora* (Arlington TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 39–72.
5. Walter Rodney, "Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade," *Journal of African History* 7:4 (1966), 431–43; Rodney, "West Africa and the Atlantic slave trade" (Nairobi, Historical Society of Tanzania, Paper No. 2, 1967); and Rodney, "Jihad and social revolution in Futa Jallon in the eighteenth century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4:2 (1968), 269–84.
6. David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
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9. Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life. Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
10. See also Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery. The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
11. See, for example, Ann O'Hear, *Power Relations in Nigeria: Ilorin Slaves and their Successors* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997); Fred Morton, *Children of Ham, Freed Slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast, 1873 to 1907* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990); Jonathan Glassman, *Feasts and Riot, Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856–1868* (London: James Currey, 1995); and Peter Haenger, *Sklaveei und Sklavenemanzipation an der Goldküste* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1997).
12. See Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*; and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The central Sudan and the Atlantic slave trade," in Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David C. Newbury, and Michelle D. Wagner (eds.), *Paths toward the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina* (Atlanta: African Studies Association Press, 1994), 345–70.

Preface to the Third Edition

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2. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975.
3. Paris: Maspero, 1975.
4. Mariana Candido has been especially helpful in my review of the recent literature on central and southern Africa. Various students and former students have helped with references and comments, including Feisal Farrah, Yacine Daddi Addoun, and Vanessa Oliveira. Katrina Keefer proof read the manuscript, while David Silver assisted in editing the notes and bibliography. My sincere thanks for all this support.
5. Joseph C. Miller, compiler, *Slavery and Slaving in World History. A Bibliography, 1900–1996*. 2nd ed. (2 vols.) (Armon, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999).

1. Africa and Slavery

1. I have been particularly influenced by M. I. Finley, "Slavery," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 14 (1968), 307–13; in the following analysis, other works by Finley have also been consulted, including M. I. Finley, "Between slavery and freedom," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 6 (1964), 233–49; M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973); M. I. Finley, "Slavery and the historians," *Social History* 12 (1979), 247–61, and M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1980).
2. Kopytoff and Miers discuss this in terms of the marginality of slaves; see their "African 'slavery' as an institution of marginality," in Suzanne Miers, and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).
3. A particularly perceptive discussion that emphasizes this point is that of Jack Goody, "Technology, tradition and the state in Africa: Slavery in time and space,"

- in James L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 16–42.
4. The relationship between control over production and control over reproduction has been argued most fully by Meillassoux; see Claude Meillassoux, “From reproduction to production,” *Economy and Society* 1 (1972), 93–105; Meillassoux, *Femmes, greniers, et capitaux* (Paris: Maspero, 1976); Meillassoux, “Correspondence on slavery,” *Economy and Society* 7:3 (1978a), 321–31; and Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery. The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). For a critique of Meillassoux’s approach, see Bridget O’Laughlin, “Production and reproduction: Meillassoux’s *Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux*,” *Critique of Anthropology* 2:8 (1977), 3–32.
 5. See the excellent discussion in Claude Meillassoux, “Female slavery,” in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).
 6. Finley, “Slavery,” 310.
 7. I have been influenced by the following works: Emmanuel Terray, “Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: The case of the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman,” *Economy and Society* 3 (1974), 315–45; and Terray, “On exploitation: Elements of an autocritique,” *Critique of Anthropology* 4:13–14 (1979), 29–39; Aidan Foster-Carter, “The modes of production controversy,” *New Left Review* (1978), 107–112; P. P. Rey, *Colonialisme, neo-colonialisme, et transition au capitalisme* (Paris, 1971); and P. P. Rey, *Les Alliances de classes* (Paris, 1973); Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. Eric J. Hobsbawm, ed. (New York, 1965); Bogumil Jewsiewicki, “L’Anthropologie économique et les ‘modes de production,’” *Cultures et développement* 9:2 (1977), 195–246; and R. A. Padgug, “Problems in the theory of slavery and slave society,” *Science and Society* 40 (1976), 3–27. For a critical survey of the Marxist literature, see R. C. C. Law, “In search of a Marxist perspective on pre-colonial tropical Africa,” *Journal of African History* 19:3 (1978b), 441–52; and Law, “For Marx but with reservations about Althusser: A comment on Bernstein and Depelchin,” *History in Africa* 8 (1981), 247–51.
 8. This is discussed more fully in Paul E. Lovejoy, “Slavery in the context of ideology,” in Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981c), 11–38.
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 10. Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formations of Peripheral Capitalism*, trans. Brian Pearce (London and New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976); Henry Bernstein and Jacques Depelchin, “The object of African history: a materialist perspective,” *History in Africa* 5, 6 (1978–1979), 1–20; 17–43; Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 1977); and Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: NLB, 1970). For an excellent critique of the historical approach of these Marxists, see Law, “For Marx but with reservations about Althusser: a comment on Bernstein and Depelchin.”

11. Terray, "On exploitation: elements of an autocritique."
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14. Meillassoux, "From reproduction to production," 93–105.
15. This discussion accepts the valuable contribution of Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'slavery' as an institution of marginality," in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 3–81. They understand slavery as one form of dependency in societies organized on the basis of kinship, but my perspective diverges from their interpretation over the development of institutionalized slavery under the impetus of foreign trade and systematic enslavement. For a discussion of this issue, see Paul E. Lovejoy, "Indigenous African slavery," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions historiques* 6:1 (1979b), 19–61; and Igor Kopytoff, "Commentary one," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 6:1 (1979), 62–77. Also see Joseph C. Miller, "Lineages, ideology and the history of slavery in western central Africa," in Lovejoy, *Ideology of Slavery in Africa*, 43–63.
16. Douglas explored the institution of pawnship, but not in a historical context, in her pioneering article in 1964. See Mary Douglas, "Matriliney and pawnship in Central Africa," *Africa* 34:4 (1964), 301–13; and Douglas, "Blood-debts and clientship among the Lele," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 90 (1960), 1–28. For a critique, see Paul E. Lovejoy and Toyin Falola, *Pawnship, Slavery and Colonialism in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003).
17. There are many important studies of the relationship between marriage and slavery; see, for example, Meillassoux, "From reproduction to production"; Kopytoff and Miers, "African 'slavery' as an institution of marginality"; Miller, "Lineages, ideology and the history of slavery in western central Africa," 45–6; P. P. Rey, "Articulation des modes de dépendance et des modes de reproduction dans deux sociétés lignagères (Punu et Kunyi du Congo-Brazzaville)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 9 (1969), 415–40; and the contributions in Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); especially Martin Klein, "Female slavery in the western Sudan," and Claude Meillassoux, "Female slavery." Also see Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
18. Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976).
19. For a perceptive discussion of slavery in the context of Islamic society, see H. Brunschvig, "'Abd'," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1 (London, 1960), 24–40. See also Allan G.B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade* (London: C. Hurst, 1970); J. O. Hunwick, "Notes on slavery in the Songhay empire," in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: Frank Cass, vol. II 1985); Hunwick, "Black Africans in the Islamic world: an understudied

- dimension of the black diaspora,” *Tarikh* 5 (1978), 20–40; and Bernard Lewis, “The African diaspora and the civilization of Islam,” in Martin L. Kilson and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 37–56; Frederick Cooper, “Islam and cultural hegemony: the ideology of slaveowners on the East African coast,” in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 270–307; L. O. Sanneh, “Islamic slavery in the African perspective,” in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: Frank Cass, vol. I, 1985).
20. The debate over the impact of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on Africa is divided into two schools, one arguing that the influence was profound and the other considering the impact marginal. An important article in the debate is Walter Rodney, “Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade,” *Journal of African History* 7:4 (1966), 431–43; and see his Walter Rodney, *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Historical Society of Tanzania, Paper No. 2) Nairobi, 1967. Also see J. D. Fage, “Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African History,” *Journal of African History* 10:3 (1969), 393–404; and Martin Klein and Paul E. Lovejoy, “Slavery in West Africa,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 181–212. In its simplest formulation, the trans-Atlantic slave trade is seen as the direct cause of social stratification in African societies; for a far more sophisticated interpretation, see J. D. Fage, “Slaves and society in Western Africa, c.1445–c.1700,” *Journal of African History* 21:3 (1980), 289–310. However, some scholars, e.g., Werner Peukert, *Der Atlantische Sklavenhandel von Dahomey 1740–1797: Wirtschaftsanthropologie und Sozialgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1978), have rejected an interpretation that emphasizes the Atlantic slave trade. For a review of this literature, see Paul E. Lovejoy, “The impact of the slave trade on Africa,” *Trends in History* 3:1 (1981).
21. The pioneering census of the Atlantic slave trade is Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); it has been the subject of considerable debate and has prompted much additional research. For summaries and critiques, see J. E. Inikori, “Measuring the Atlantic slave trade: an assessment of Curtin and Anstey,” *Journal of African History* 17: 2 (1976), 197–223; and Inikori, “The origin of the diaspora: the slave trade from Africa,” *Tarikh* 5:4 (1978), 7–8; Paul E. Lovejoy, “The impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa: a review of the literature,” *Journal of African History* 30 (1989), 365–9; David Henige, “Measuring the immeasurable: the Atlantic slave trade, West African population and the Pyrrhonian critic,” *Journal of African History* 27 (1986), 295–313; Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life. Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Per O. Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society. The Danish Slave Trade from West Africa and Afro-Danish Relations on the Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast* (Trondheim, 1995). The present analysis, which modifies the demographic projections presented in the first and second editions of this book, is based on the database of slaving voyages, as published online by David Eltis, David Richardson, Stephen Behrendt, and Manolo Florentino (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>) and discussed in David Eltis and David Richardson, *The Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). The voyage database contains records of

more than 35,000 slaving voyages from the coast of Africa, including the earlier studies of Richardson, Daget, Postma, Stein, Vila Vilar, Curtin, Curto, and other scholars who have attempted to locate and analyze quantifiable data on the trade. Because the database supercedes earlier efforts at quantification, I have not discussed the various debates that have arisen in the literature, which now are largely irrelevant, and unless otherwise noted, this study draws on the database. Although I have drawn on Elbl's work for the early period, and on various studies for the nineteenth century, it is unclear how many slaves were taken to the offshore islands and to Europe in the period between 1522 and 1865, although the number was probably not large. Earlier estimates of the regional origins of slaves in the eighteenth century drew on Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade, A Census*, 207; Curtin, "Measuring the Atlantic slave trade," in S. L. Engerman and E. D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975b), 1–12; Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 27; Johannes Postma, "The origin of African slaves: the Dutch activities on the Guinea coast, 1675–1795," in S. L. Engerman and E. D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 42, 49; Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 46; Patrick Manning, "The slave trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640–1890," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 117; K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, 1957), 226; David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 54; Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, "Slaves from the Windward Coast," *Journal of African History* 21:1 (1980), 17–34, but see Lovejoy, "The impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Africa: a review of the literature"; and the critique in Hernaes, *Slaves, Danes, and African Coast Society*. Also see José C. Curto, "A quantitative reassessment of the legal Portuguese slave trade from Luanda, Angola, 1710–1830," *African Economic History* 20 (1992), 1–25; Curto, "The legal Portuguese slave trade from Benguela, Angola, 1730–1828: A quantitative re-appraisal," *Africa* (São Paulo) 16 (1993), 101–16; Gwyn Campbell, "Madagascar and Mozambique in the slave trade of the western Indian Ocean 1800–1861," *Slavery and Abolition* 9:3 (1988), 166–93; Serge Daget, *De la traite à l'esclavage*, (Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer. 2 vols, 1988); James Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Joseph C. Miller, "The political economy of the Angolan slave trade in the eighteenth century," *The Indian Historical Review* 15, 1/2 (1988/1989), 152–87.

2. On the Frontiers of Islam, 1400–1600

1. Ralph A. Austen, "The trans-Saharan slave trade: a tentative census," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 23–76. Also see Raymond Mauny, *Tableau géographique de l'ouest africain au moyen âge* (Dakar: IFAN, 1961), 377–9; Marion Malowist, "Le Commerce d'or et d'esclaves

- au Soudan Occidentale,” *Africana Bulletin* 4 (1966), 59–72; Richard Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia* (London, 1961), 372–88, 409–19; and Joseph E. Harris, *The African Presence in Asia: Consequences of the East African Slave Trade* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 77–90.
2. Ibn Battuta, *Voyages*, trans. C. Defremery and B. R. Sanguinette (vols IV) (Paris 1922), 445. For a fuller discussion, see Mauny, *Tableau géographique de l’ouest africain au moyen âge*, 377–9.
 3. J. O. Hunwick, “Notes on slavery in the Songhay empire,” in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: Frank Cass, vol. II, 1985).
 4. Allan G. B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade* (London: C. Hurst, 1970), 59–60.
 5. R. S. O’Fahey and J. L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London, 1974), 56.
 6. A. da Cadamosto, *The Voyages of Cadamosto*, trans. G. R. Crone (London, 1937), 30. For a fuller discussion, see Martin Klein, “Servitude among the Wolof and Sereer of Senegambia,” in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 339–41.
 7. Sharon Nicholson, “Climatic variations in the Sahel and other African regions during the past five centuries,” *Journal of Arid Environments* 1 (1978), 3–24.
 8. For a discussion of the transformation of slavery in the savanna during these centuries, see Claude Meillassoux, “Rôle de l’esclavage dans l’histoire de l’Afrique occidentale,” *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 2:1 (1978), 117–48; Fisher and Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade*; L. O. Sanneh, “Islamic slavery in the African perspective,” in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: Frank Cass, vol. I, 1985).
 9. Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (London: Methuen, 1973), 65, 112–13; Sanneh, “Islamic slavery in the African perspective”; Fisher and Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade*, 129–44.
 10. H. R. Palmer, *The Bornu Sahara and Sudan* (London, 1936), 218.
 11. Palmer, *The Bornu Sahara and Sudan*, 242.
 12. John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak, eds., *Mi’raj al-Su’ud. Ahmad Baba’s Replies on Slavery* (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 2000).
 13. As translated in Hunwick and Harrak, *Mi’raj al-Su’ud*.
 14. Cadamosto, *The Voyages of Cadamosto*, 30.
 15. Philip D. Curtin, “The slave trade and the Atlantic basin: intercontinental perspectives,” in N. I. Huggins, M. Kilson, and D. M. Fox, eds., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience*, vol. 1, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 74–93; Charles Verlinden, *L’Esclavage dans l’Europe médiévale: péninsule Ibérique-France* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1955); Charles Verlinden, “La Colonie vénitienne de Tana, centre de la traite des esclaves au XIV^e et au début XV^e siècles,” in *Studi in onore di Gino Luzzatto* (2 vols.), vol. II (Milan, 1950), 1–25; Marian Malowist, “Les Débuts du système de plantations dans la période des grandes découvertes,” *Africana Bulletin* 10 (1969), 9–30; and Virginia Rau, “The Madeiran sugarcane plantations,” in H. B. Johnson Jr, eds., *From Reconquest to Empire: The Iberian Background to Latin American History* (New York, 1970), 71–84.

16. The nature of agricultural slavery in Songhay is a subject of considerable debate between scholars who attempt to compare the Songhay political economy with feudal Europe and those who do not. Nonetheless, all agree that slaves were used extensively in agriculture. See M. Tymowski, "Les Domaines des princes du Songhay (Soudan occidental): comparaison avec la grande propriété foncière en Europe au début de l'époque féodale," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 25:6 (1970), 1637–58; N. G. Kodjo, "Contribution à l'étude des tribus dites serviles du Songai," *Bulletin de l'IFAN* 38:4 (1976), 805–10; Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "L'Esclavage d'échange et captivité familiale chez les Songhay zerma," *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* 43:1 (1975), 151–67; D. A. Ol'derogge, "Feodalizm v Zapadnom Sudane 16–18 vv. *Sovetskaya Etnografiya*," 4 (1957), 91–103; and Hunwick, "Notes on slavery in the Songhay empire," 1985.
17. Kodjo, "Contribution à l'étude des tribus dites serviles du Songai," 808–9; also see Paul E. Lovejoy, "The internal trade of West Africa before 1800," in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa*, (3rd ed.), vol. I (London: Longmans, 1985), 648–90.
18. Kodjo, "Contribution à l'étude des tribus dites serviles du Songai," 790–812; and Lovejoy, "The internal trade of West Africa before 1800."
19. V. Fernandes, *Description de la Côte occidentale d'Afrique (Sénégal au Cap de Monte, Archipels) par V. Fernandes (1505–1510)*, trans. P. De Cenival and Th. Monod (Paris, 1938), 87. For a fuller discussion, see Timothy F. Garrard, *Akan Gold Weights and the Gold Trade* (London: Longmans, 1980); and Emmanuel Terray, *Une histoire du royaume abron du Gyaman. Des origines à la conquête coloniale* (Paris, 1983).
20. Mauny, *Tableau géographique de l'ouest africain au moyen âge*, 330, 341; and Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Borno salt industry," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11:4 (1978a), 629–68.
21. Pankhurst, *An Introduction to the Economic History of Ethiopia*, 372–88, 409–19. Also see M. Abir, "The Ethiopian slave trade and its relation to the Islamic world," in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol. II (London: Frank Cass, 1985).
22. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, "The coast, 1498–1840," in R. Oliver and G. Mathew, eds., *History of East Africa*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 150–2; Raymond Kent, *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar, 1500–1700* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 69–71; Gervase Mathew, "The East African coast until the coming of the Portuguese," in R. Oliver and G. Mathew, eds., *History of East Africa*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 106, 107, 121.
23. John L. Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1979); and Curtin, "The slave trade and the Atlantic basin: intercontinental perspectives," 74–93.
24. The most thorough study of slavery in Europe is the massive study of Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale: péninsule Ibérique-France*.
25. Rau, "The Madeiran sugarcane plantations," 76–7; Malowist, "Les Débuts du système de plantations dans la période des grandes découvertes," 9–30; and Curtin, "The slave trade and the Atlantic basin: intercontinental perspectives," 75–81.
26. Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682*, 57–9.
27. Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682*, 67–8, 73, 76.
28. Cadamosto, *The Voyages of Cadamosto*, 30.

29. Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), 3–13; Walter Rodney, “Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade,” *Journal of African History* 7:4 (1966), 431–42; Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
30. Sylvia Harrop, “The economy of the West African coast in the sixteenth century,” *Economic Bulletin of Ghana* 8:4 (1964), 23–4; J. D. Fage, “Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African History,” *Journal of African History* 10:3 (1969), 396–7; John W. Blake, *European Beginnings in West Africa, 1454–1578* (New York, 1937), 93; Richard D. Graham, “The slave trade, human sacrifice, and depopulation in Benin history,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 6: (1965), 318–19; Ivor Wilks, “Land, labour, capital and the forest kingdom of Asante: a model of early change,” in J. Friedman and R. M. Rowlands, eds., *The Evolution of Social Systems* (London: Duckworth, 1977) 517–19; and John L. Vogt, “The early São Tomé-Príncipe slave trade with Mina, 1500–1540,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 6:3 (1973), 453–67.
31. Graham, “The slave trade, human sacrifice, and depopulation in Benin history,” 318–21; and Alan Ryder, *Benin and the Europeans, 1485–1897* (London: Longmans, 1969), 24–84.
32. Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682*, 57; J. Bato’ora Ballongwen-Mewuda, *São Jorge da Mina, 1482–1637* (Paris: J. Touzot, 1993).
33. Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682*, 57–8, 72; and Vogt, *The Early São Tomé-Príncipe Slave Trade with Mina, 1500–1540*, 453–67.
34. Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 37–69; Vansina, “Long-distance trade routes in central Africa,” *Journal of African History* 3:3 (1962), 377; David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbors under the Influence of the Portuguese* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966); Joseph C. Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” in Martin L. Kilson and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 79–84; John Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo in the era of the civil wars, 1641–1718* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979); Thornton, “Early Kongo-Portuguese relations: a new interpretation,” *History in Africa* 8 (1981), 183–204; Thornton, “The Origins and early history of the kingdom of Kongo, ca. 1350–1550,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34:1 (2001), 89–120.
35. Thornton, “Early Kongo-Portuguese relations: a new interpretation,” 192.
36. Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” 79–84; and Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbors under the Influence of the Portuguese*, 25–6, 32, 40–1.
37. Thornton, “Early Kongo-Portuguese relations: a new interpretation,” 192.
38. Thornton, “Early Kongo-Portuguese relations: a new interpretation,” 188, 191–2; Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469–1682*, 147; and Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” 79–88.
39. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, 37–60; Vansina, “Long-distance trade routes in central Africa,” 377; Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbors under the Influence of the Portuguese*, 48–63; and Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” 84–92.

40. This analysis of slavery in Kongo is based on Thornton, “Early Kongo-Portuguese relations: a new interpretation,” 187; Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo in the era of the civil wars*, 60–2; and Thornton, “The Origins and early history of the kingdom of Kongo,” 89–120; Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” 83; and A. S. Orlova, “Institution de l’esclavage dans l’état du Congo au moyen âge. (XVI^e–XVI^e siècles),” in *VII Congrès International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques*, vol. ix. (Moscow, 1964), 196–202.
41. Anne Hilton, “The Jaga reconsidered,” *Journal of African History* 22:2 (1981), 191–202.
42. Probably based on a published account of Philippe Pigafetta, who compiled his information from Duarte Lopez, the Portuguese ambassador to the Kingdom of Kongo, who was in Kongo in the late 1570s. The account here is taken from the further compilations of Confalonieri, and published in J. Cuvelier and L. Jadin, *L’Ancien Congo d’après les archives romaines (1518–1640)* (Brussels, 1954), 135. See also J. D. Fage, “Slaves and society in Western Africa, c.1445–c.1700,” *Journal of African History* 21:3 (1980), 305.
43. Thornton, “Early Kongo-Portuguese relations: a new interpretation,” 191.
44. Robert Garfield, “A history of São Tomé Island, 1470–1655,” Unpublished PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1971, 40, 53, 61, 64.
45. The first plantations were established in São Tomé by 1499; by the middle of the sixteenth century, 2,150 tons of sugar were being produced for export; see Garfield, “A history of São Tomé Island, 1470–1655,” 20, 52.
46. As cited in Fage, “Slaves and society in Western Africa, c.1445–c.1700,” 305.
47. As cited in Fage, “Slaves and society in Western Africa, c.1445–c.1700,” 308.
48. John Hawkins, as quoted in E. Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930–1935), 48–9.
49. Rodney, “Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade,” 431–42.
50. P. E. H. Hair, “Sources on early Sierra Leone: (6) Barreira on just enslavement, 1606,” *Africana Research Bulletin* 6 (1975), 52–74.
51. Hair, “Sources on early Sierra Leone: (6) Barreira on just enslavement, 1606,” 67.
52. Rodney’s pioneering work on the impact of the slave trade on Africa has long provided inspiration for scholars, but his overly simplistic model has been greatly modified. The most sophisticated treatment of early sources for purposes of analyzing social relations in African societies at the time of early European contact on the West African coast is Fage, “Slaves and society in Western Africa, c.1445–c.1700.” Fage shows a far more complicated interaction between indigenous developments, foreign trade, and the expansion of servile relationships than Rodney did in his seminal article.

3. The Export Trade in Slaves, 1600–1800

1. This transformation has been examined from a number of perspectives. See Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex. Essays in Atlantic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), who has examined the transformation in terms of “intercommunicating zones” from which much of Africa had been isolated previously. H. A. Gemery and Jan Hogendorn, “The

- Atlantic slave trade: a tentative economic model,” *Journal of African History* 15:2 (1974), 233–46, have employed an economic model, “vent for surplus,” in discussing the opening of trade (1974); Walter Rodney, “Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade,” *Journal of African History* 7:4 (1966), 431–43, has considered the social impact; and J. D. Fage, “Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African History,” *Journal of African History* 10:3 (1969), 393–404, has discussed the political repercussions. Although change began in the sixteenth century, the expansion of trade in the seventeenth century was so great that the real breakthrough occurred then.
2. The present analysis modifies the demographic projections presented in the first and second editions of this book; see the database of slaving voyages, as published online by Eltis, Richardson, Behrendt, and Manolo 2009 (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>), and discussed in David Eltis and David Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010). For the early period, I have drawn on Ivana Elbl, “The volume of the early Atlantic slave trade, 1450–1521,” *Journal of African History* 38:1 (1997), 31–75.
 3. E. Philip LeVeen, “The African slave supply response,” *African Studies Review* 18:1 (1975), 9–28; Richard Bean, *The British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1975), 68–73, 123–57; and Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Also see Philip D. Curtin, “Measuring the Atlantic slave trade,” in S. L. Engerman and E. D. Genovese, eds., *Race and Slavery in the Western Hemisphere: Quantitative Studies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), vol. I, 158–68, vol. II, appendix 8; and Gemery and Hogendorn, “The Atlantic slave trade: a tentative economic model,” 233–46.
 4. See, for example, Philip D. Curtin, “The slave trade and the Atlantic basin: intercontinental perspectives,” in N. I. Huggins, M. Kilson, and D. M. Fox, eds., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience*, vol. 1, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 86–7.
 5. LeVeen, “African slave supply response,” 9–13. Le Veen further shows that the rise in the price for prime male slaves rose at the same rate in West Indies and Africa, which again indicates a strong correlation between the demand for slaves and their supply, at least in the aggregate; see E. Philip LeVeen, *British Slave Trade Suppression Policies, 1821–1865* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 8.
 6. The overall estimates are supplemented by scattered data in a number of works; see David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and Their Neighbors under the Influence of the Portuguese* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 25–6, 28, 40–1; Phyllis Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576–1870* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 117–35; and Joseph C. Miller, “The Slave trade of Congo and Angola,” in Martin L. Kilson and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 86.
 7. R. C. C. Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 217–36; Patrick Manning, “The slave trade in the Bight of Benin, 1640–1890,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 107–41; and Peter Morton-Williams, “The Oyo Yoruba and the Atlantic slave trade, 1670–1830,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3:1 (1964), 25–45.

8. There is considerable disagreement among specialists over the importance of Dahomey and Oyo in the slave trade. Werner Peukert, *Der Atlantische Sklavenhandel von Dahomey 1740–1797: Wirtschaftsanthropologie und Sozialgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1978), argues that the slave trade played a far less significant role in Dahomey history than other scholars have thought; Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960*, argues the reverse, to the extent that he considers Dahomey to have been more important than Oyo. Finally, Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836* 217–28, 240–1, demonstrates the key role of the slave trade in the development of the Oyo economy, although his balanced view examines other factors too. The synthesis presented here attempts to assess the relative merits of these conflicting interpretations.

An additional problem in the debate relates to estimates of the volume of the slave trade from the Bight of Benin.

Bight of Benin: Estimates of Slave Exports, 1741–1800

Decade	Manning	Peukert	Voyage Database
1741–1750	70,100	140,400	108,200
1751–1760	70,500	129,000	122,600
1761–1770	102,700	149,500	110,400
1771–1780	90,700	175,500	109,900
1781–1790	153,100	164,000	113,700
1791–1800	74,00	130,000*	93,200
TOTAL	561,100	888,400	658,000

* 1791–1797

Sources: Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Peukert, *Der Atlantische Sklavenhandel von Dahomey 1740–1797: Wirtschaftsanthropologie und Sozialgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1978), 305–6; and table 3.4.

9. K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, 1957), 226; and Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 28–33, 44–7.
10. J. K. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbours, 1700–1807* (London, 1971); Raymond A. Kea, “Administration and trade in the Akwamu Empire, 1681–1730,” Unpublished paper presented at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, 1976; and Joseph R. La Torre, “Wealth surpasses everything: an economic history of Asante, 1750–1874,” Unpublished PhD thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1978. La Torre provides an alternative set of data on slave exports from the Gold Coast, although his estimates for the Dutch portion of the trade conflict in different tables (pp. 431 and 434). La Torre calculated that 426,000 slaves left the Gold Coast between 1751 and 1800, whereas the voyage database accounts for 554,000 (Table 3.4).
11. Timothy C. Weiskel, “The precolonial Baule: a reconstruction,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 18:4 (1978) 503–27.
12. For the slave trade in the Bight of Biafra and its impact on the local economy, see David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development*

- in *South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); A. J. H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); E. J. Alagoa, “Long-distance trade and states in the Niger delta,” *Journal of African History* 11:3 (1970), 319–29; Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1972) and Carolyn Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Interior of the Bight of Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2010).
13. Elizabeth Isichei, *Igbo Worlds: An Anthology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 10, citing John Barbot.
 14. Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (2 vols) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), vol. I, 162–7.
 15. Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, “Slaves from the Windward Coast,” *Journal of African History* 21:1 (1980), 17–34; and Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 240–70.
 16. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 202, 254–5.
 17. For the trans-Saharan and Red Sea trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Ralph A. Austen, “The trans-Saharan slave trade: a tentative census,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 30–9; M. Abir, “The Ethiopian slave trade and its relation to the Islamic world,” in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa*, vol. II (London: Frank Cass, 1985); Ralph A. Austen, “The Islamic Red Sea slave trade: an effort at quantification,” in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies* (Chicago, 1979b), 443–67; and Terence Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan, 1700–1820* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1978), 33–4.
 18. Walz, *Trade between Egypt and Bilad as-Sudan, 1700–1820*, 33–4 surveys the various estimates for slave imports into Egypt; he also provides an excellent analysis of the slave trade in Cairo (see pp. 124–30, 173–221). For imports into Morocco, see Allan Meyers, “Class, ethnicity and slavery: the origins of the Moroccan Abid,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 10:3 (1977), 427–42.
 19. Austen, “The trans-Saharan slave trade: a tentative census,” 68; Edmond B. Martin and T. C. I. Ryan, “A quantitative assessment of the Arab slave trade of East Africa,” *Kenya Historical Review* 5 (1977), 72–3; E. A. Alpers, *The East African Slave Trade*. (Nairobi: East African Publishing Co., 1969); Alpers, “Trade, state, and society among the Yao in the nineteenth century,” *Journal of African History* 10:3 (1967), 405–20; Alpers, “The French slave trade in East Africa (1721–1810),” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 10:1 (1970), 80–124; and J. M. Filliot, *La Traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1974), 113–26.
 20. Davies, *The Royal African Company*, 226.
 21. Joseph C. Miller, “Mortality in the Atlantic slave trade: statistical evidence on causality,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 (1981), 413; also see Philip D. Curtin, “Epidemiology and the slave trade,” *Political Science Quarterly* 83:2 (1968), 190–216.

22. Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic slave trade: statistical evidence on causality," 385–423.
23. Miller, "Mortality in the Atlantic slave trade: statistical evidence on causality," 413.
24. For a discussion of sex ratios, see Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, 19, 28; Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 149–50, 223; and Bean, *British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 132–4.
25. There is some indication that the age and sex distribution changed over time, resulting in a larger percentage of males. See, for example, the calculations on the sex ratios and age distribution of exported slaves, 1637–1645:

Category	Guinea	%	Angola	%	Total	%
Male as % of adults	1587	58.9	706	51.2	2293	56.3
Male as % of total		51.4		34.2		44.5
Female as % of adults	1107	41.1	672	48.8	1779	43.7
Female as % of total		35.9		32.6		34.5
Children	392	12.7	686	33.2	1078	20.9
TOTAL	3086		2064		5150	

Source: Ernst Van den Boogard and Pieter C. Emmer, "The Dutch participation in the Atlantic slave trade, 1596–1650," in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 366.

Also see the sex and age profiles discussed for 60,000 slaves (51 percent men, 35 percent women, and 13 percent children) transported by the Royal African Company between 1673 and 1711 (Davies, *The Royal African Company*, 229); 12,697 slaves exported from Dahomey between 1713 and 1720 (47 percent men, 28 percent women, and 25 percent children) (Jean Mettas, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. Serge Daget (Nantes, 1978); 49,884 slaves arriving in Jamaica on British ships in 1791–1798 (Klein, *Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 149); and 47,851 slaves arriving in Havana between 1790 and 1799 (Klein, *Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 223). Also see Patrick Manning, "The enslavement of Africans: a demographic model," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15:3 (1981), 517.

26. Manning, "The enslavement of Africans: a demographic model," 499–526.

4. The Enslavement of Africans, 1600–1800

- I. Various scholars have approached this problem from different perspectives; see, for example, Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); R. C. C. Law, "Horses, firearms and political power in pre-colonial West Africa," *Past and Present* 72 (1976), 112–32; Jean Bazin, "Guerre et servitude à Segou," in Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: Maspero, 1975), 135–82; H. A. Gemery and Jan Hogendorn, "Technological change, slavery and the slave trade," in C. J. Dewey and A. G. Hopkins, eds., *The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and*

- India* (London: Athlone Press, 1978), 243–58; and Richard L. Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
2. Sharon Nicholson, “Climatic variations in the Sahel and other African regions during the past five centuries,” *Journal of Arid Environments* 1 (1978), 3–24.
 3. For a discussion of drought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see: S. Cissoko, “Famines et épidémies à Tombouctou et dans la Boucle du Niger du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle,” *Bulletin de l’IFAN* 30:3 (1968), 806–21; Paul Lovejoy and S. Baier, “The desert-side economy of the central Sudan,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 7:4 (1975), 570–4; and Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, vol. II (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975a), 5.
 4. Cissoko, “Famines et épidémies à Tombouctou et dans la Boucle du Niger du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle,” Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, vol. II, 5; and Lovejoy and Baier, “The desert-side economy of the central Sudan,” 570–4. For a discussion of the general implications of these climatic conditions, see Paul E. Lovejoy, “Commercial sectors in the economy of the nineteenth-century central Sudan: the trans-Saharan trade and the desert-side salt trade,” *African Economic History* 13 (1984), 85–116.
 5. For slave raiding in Sennar and Dar Fur, see R. S. O’Fahey and J. L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London, 1974), 56, 80, 161. For Borno, see R. A. Adeleye, “Hausaland and Bornu,” in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa* (London: Longmans, 1971), 504; Louis Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa: A History of the al-Kanemi Dynasty of Bornu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 25; and Allan G. B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade* (London: C. Hurst, 1970), 17–20.
 6. The discussion of Ethiopia is based on M. Abir, *Ethiopia: The Era of Princes* (New York, 1968), 27–43, 53–70, 73–93; and Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea: The Rise and Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty and Muslim European Rivalry in the Region* (London, 1980); and Richard Pankhurst, “The history of Bareya, Sanquella and other Ethiopian slaves from the borderlands of the Sudan,” Unpublished paper presented to conference on Ethiopian Feudalism, Addis Ababa, 1976.
 7. As cited in Thomas Hodgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives*. 2nd ed (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 178–9.
 8. John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak (eds.), *Mi’raj al-Su’ud. Ahmad Baba’s Replies on Slavery* (Rabat: Institute of African Studies, 2000).
 9. Adeleye, “Hausaland and Bornu,” 508–29.
 10. This analysis is based on the research of Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves* and Bazin, “Guerre et servitude à Segou,” 135–82.
 11. Martin Klein, “Servitude among the Wolof and Sereer of Senegambia,” in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977a), 344–5; and Klein, “Social and economic factors in the Muslim revolution in Senegambia,” *Journal of African History* 13:3 (1972), 427–9.
 12. Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa: early phases and interrelations in Mauritania and Senegal,” *Journal of African History* 12:1 (1971), 11–24; and Walter Rodney,

- “Jihad and social revolution in Futa Jallon in the eighteenth century,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 4:2 (1968), 269–84.
13. Joseph C. Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” in Martin L. Kilson and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 85.
 14. John Thornton, *The Kingdom of Kongo in the era of the civil wars, 1641–1718* (1979), 57–8, 110, 217–8.
 15. Jan Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 124–54; David Birmingham, *Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbors under the Influence of the Portuguese* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 48–63; Joseph C. Miller, “The political economy of the Angolan slave trade in the eighteenth century,” *The Indian Historical Review* 15:1/2 (1988/9), 152–87.
 16. For an early discussion, see Joseph C. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: Early States among the Mbundu of Angola* (Oxford, 1976); Miller, “Imbangala lineage slavery (Angola),” in Miers and Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa*, 205–33 and Miller, “Political economy of the Angolan slave trade in the eighteenth century,” For more recent interpretation, see Beatrix Heintz, “The extraordinary journey of the Jaga through the centuries: Critical approaches to precolonial Angolan historical sources,” *History in Africa* 34 (2007), 67–101; Jan Vansina, *How Societies are Born. Governance in West Central Africa before 1600* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 196–201.
 17. Miller, “Imbangala lineage slavery (Angola),” 211–12.
 18. Miller, “Political economy of the Angolan slave trade in the eighteenth century”; Miller, “Slave Trade of Congo and Angola,” 260–1; and Miller, “Central Africa during the era of the Slave Trade,” in Linda Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 21–69.
 19. For a survey of these states, see Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, 70–97, 155–79; Jean-Luc Vellut, “Notes sur le Lunda et la frontière luso-africaine,” *Études d’histoire africaine* 3 (1972), 61–166; Ian Cunison, “Kazembe and the Portuguese, 1798–1832,” *Journal of African History* 2:1 (1961), 61–76; and Jan Vansina, *How Societies Are Born : Governance in West Central Africa* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 253–67.
 20. E. A. Alpers, *The East African Slave Trade* (Nairobi: East African Publishing Co. 1969); Alpers, “Trade, state, and society among the Yao in the nineteenth century,” *Journal of African History* 10:3 (1967), 405–20; Alpers, “The French slave trade in East Africa (1721–1810),” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 10:1 (1970), 80–124; and A. F. Isaacman, *Mozambique: The Africanization of a European Institution: The Zambesi Prazos, 1750–1902* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972).
 21. This discussion of the *prazos* is from Isaacman, *Mozambique: The Africanization of a European Institution: The Zambesi Prazos, 1750–1902*; Allan Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, “The Prazeros as transfrontiersmen,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8:1 (1975), 1–39; and M. D. D. Newitt, *The Portuguese Settlement on the Zambezi* (London, 1973).
 22. E. A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa: Changing Patterns of International Trade to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

23. Gill Shepherd, "The Comorians and the East African slave trade," in James L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 74–5.
24. Maurice Bloch, "Modes of production and slavery in Madagascar: two case studies," in Watson, *Asian and African Systems of Slavery*, 100–34; Shepherd, "Comorians and the East African slave trade," 76; and J. M. Filliot, *La Traite des esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: ORSTOM, 1974).
25. For a discussion of Oyo, see R. C. C. Law, *The Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 217–20.
26. Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836*, 92, 148–9, 154.
27. Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); for the extent of Oyo hegemony in the eighteenth century, see Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836*, 89, 119–44, 226–7.
28. Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836*, 219–23.
29. For various interpretations of the history of Dahomey, see Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836*, 221–2; Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960*; Werner Peukert, *Der Atlantische Sklavenhandel von Dahomey 1740–1797: Wirtschaftsanthropologie und Sozialgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1978); and I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Its Neighbours, 1708–1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).
30. Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836*, 219–23.
31. Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960*. It should be noted that my initial interpretation conflicted with Manning's over the proportion of Aja in the exported population, but I now concur with Manning's interpretation. Also see Nicoue Lodjou Gayibor, *Le Genyi. Un royaume oublié de la Côte de Guinée au temps de la traite des noirs* (Lomé, 1990); and R. C. C. Law, *The Slave Coast of West Africa, 1550–1750. The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on an African Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); and R. C. C. Law, *The Kingdom of Allada* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).
32. Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960*; and confirmed by Law, *Oyo Empire, c. 1600–c. 1836*, 226–7, who reports that slaves of northern origin were not a major item in the transit trade to the coast until the last decades of the eighteenth century. Slaves of similar origin may have been important earlier but have been disguised through acculturation or a different system of identifying slaves.
33. This account of Akwamu is based on Raymond A. Kea, "Administration and trade in the Akwamu Empire, 1681–1730," Unpublished paper presented at the American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, 1976; and Ivor Wilks, "The rise of the Akwamu Empire, 1650–1710," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 3 (1957), 99–136. Also see Raymond A. Kea, "The 'laboring classes' in 17th and 18th century Gold Coast states: a note on the political economy of pre-capitalist social labor," Unpublished paper presented at the African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 1980.
34. Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970),

- 26–7; J. K. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbours, 1700–1807* (London, 1971), 8–26; and Richard Bean, “A note on the relative importance of slaves and gold in West African exports,” *Journal of African History* 15:3 (1974), 351–6.
35. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, 19–22.
36. Fynn, *Asante and its Neighbours, 1700–1807*, 84; and Ivor Wilks, “The Mossi and Akan states, 1500–1800,” in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, 1971), 344–86.
37. Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976), 58–64, 77–89; David Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 30–176; and Northrup, “The growth of trade among the Igbo before 1800,” *Journal of African History* 13:2 (1972), 217–36.
38. F. I. Ekejiuba, “The Aro trade system in the nineteenth century,” *Ikenga* 1:1 (1972), 11–26; 1, 2, 10–21; Isichei, *History of the Igbo People*, 58–64, 77–89; and Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria*, 120–245; A. E. Afigbo, “The Aro of southeastern Nigeria: a socio-historical analysis of legends of their origins,” *African Notes* 6:2 (1971), 31–46; Alagoa, “Long-distance trade and states in the Niger delta,” *Journal of African History* 11:3 (1970), 319–29; Alagoa, *A History of the Niger Delta* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press), 1972; and A. J. H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 17–51.
39. Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria*, 114–16, 127–8, 130, 133. For another description, see Elizabeth Isichei, *Igbo Worlds: An Anthology of Oral Histories and Historical Descriptions* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 233, quoting an early British military source. See also E. Ilogu, “Inside Arochukwu,” *Nigeria* 53 (1957), 100–18, and Simon Ottenberg, “Ibo oracles and intergroup relations,” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 14 (1958), 295–317.
40. For a discussion of the enslavement process in terms of the relative importance of political and economic factors, see the excellent discussions in Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (2 vols.) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), vol. I, 156–7; Northrup, *Trade Without Rulers: Pre-Colonial Economic Development in South-Eastern Nigeria*, 65–84; and Philip LeVeen, “The African slave supply response,” *African Studies Review* 18:1 (1975), 9–28.
41. As edited in G. I. Jones, (ed.) “Olaudah Equiano of the Niger Ibo,” in Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Africa Remembered: Narratives of West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 75.
42. Vansina, *Kingdoms of the Savanna*, 53.
43. See, for example, Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa: early phases and interrelations in Mauritania and Senegal,” 23.
44. Hunwick and Harrak, *Mi'raj al-Su'ud. Ahmad Baba's Replies on Slavery*. Also see M. Abir, “The Ethiopian slave trade and its relation to the Islamic world,” in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), vol. II.
45. C. De Le Ronciere, “Une histoire du Bornou au XVII^e siècle par un chirurgien français captif à Tripoli,” *Revue de l'histoire des colonies françaises* (1919), 86–8. For a discussion, see Fisher and Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The*

Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade (London: C. Hurst, 1970), 53 fn.

46. Francis Moore, *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* (London, Edward Cave, 1738), 42.

5. The Organization of Slave Marketing, 1600–1800

1. For a general overview of slave marketing, see Paul Lovejoy and J. S. Hogendorn, “Slave Marketing in West Africa,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 213–35; and Joseph C. Miller, “The slave trade of Congo and Angola,” in Martin L. Kilson and Robert Rotberg, eds., *The African Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).
2. Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (2 vols.) (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), vol. 1, 155.
3. R. S. O’Fahey and J. L. Spaulding, *Kingdoms of the Sudan* (London, 1974), 56.
4. R. A. Adeleye, “Hausaland and Bornu,” in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa* (London: Longmans, 1971), 502–3.
5. John E. Lavers, “Trans-Saharan trade before 1800: towards quantification,” *Paideuma*, 1994; and M. Abir, “The Ethiopian slave trade and its relation to the Islamic world,” in J. R. Willis, ed., *Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), vol. II.
6. Paul E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade, 1700–1900* (Zaria, 1980), 58–9, 68–9, 70–1.
7. For various Juula networks, see Philip D. Curtin, “Jihad in West Africa: early phases and interrelations in Mauritania and Senegal,” *Journal of African History* 12:1 (1971), 11–24; Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (2 vols.), vol. I, 59–91; Yves Person, “Samori: une révolution Dyula (3 vols.) (Dakar: IFAN 1974); Person, “The Atlantic coast and the southern savannahs, 1800–1880,” in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa* (London: Longmans, 1968–75), vol. I, 95–122; and Michel Izard, “Les Yarse et le commerce dans le Yatenga pré-colonial,” in Claude Meillassoux, ed., *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London: International African Institute, 1971), 214–27.
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28. This discussion is based on Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism, and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960*, where the ethnic origins of slaves exported from the Bight of Benin are calculated as follows:

Years	Aja (Gbe)	Yoruba	Voltaic	Nupe	Hausa	Total
1641–1700	217,000	11,800	—	—	—	229,700
1701–1800	873,000	127,400	95,800	7,900	10,500	1,114,600

According to Manning’s calculations, 95 percent of slaves exported in the seventeenth century were Aja (Gbe); only 5 percent were Yoruba; in the eighteenth century, 78 percent were Aja; 11 percent were Yoruba; 8 percent were Voltaic; and less than 2 percent were Hausa and Nupe. Manning argues that the Aja population suffered a decline as a result; in the period from 1690 to 1740, he estimates that more than 8,500 Aja slaves were exported per year. Furthermore, he concludes that Oyo played a far less significant role in the export trade than previously thought. Even accepting Manning’s analysis of the size of the slave population identified as Aja, it is possible that some slaves of more northern origin were also exported, including acculturated slaves of non-Aja origin, slaves labeled Aja by mistake, slaves called Aja because they came from ports controlled by Aja, as well as Aja war captives and slave descendants. Although it is likely that there was a disproportionate number of Aja and related Gbe speakers, Manning’s analysis may underrepresent the number of slaves who spoke Yoruba, as well as the number of Hausa and other northerners; see Law, *Oyo Empire*, c. 1600–c. 1836, 217–8, 240–1; Paul E. Lovejoy, “The central Sudan and the Atlantic slave trade,” in Robert W. Harms, Joseph C. Miller, David C. Newbury, and Michelle D. Wagner, eds., *Paths to the Past: African Historical Essays in Honor of Jan Vansina* (Atlanta: African Studies Association, 1994), 345–70.

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9. Slavery in the Savanna during the Era of the *Jihads*

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8. Martin Klein, "Women in slavery in the western Sudan," in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa*, 67–91.
9. Klein, "Social and economic factors in the Muslim revolution in Senegambia," 424, 438; George Brooks, "Peanuts and colonialism: consequences of the commercialization of peanuts in West Africa, 1830–70," *Journal of African History* 16:1 (1975), 29, 34, 43, 46, 49–50.
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16. Andrew Roberts, "Long distance trade and production: Sinsani in the nineteenth century," *Journal of African History* 21:2 (1980), 173.
17. Roberts and Klein, "The Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the western Sudan," 392.
18. Richard Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
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20. Meillassoux, "État et conditions des esclaves à Gumbu (Mali) au XIX^e siècle," 432; and McDougall, "Desert and Sown."
21. Marion Johnson, "The economic foundations of an Islamic theocracy – the case of Masina," *Journal of African History* 17:4 (1976), 482–94. It should be noted, however, that Johnson refers to slaves as "serfs." Elsewhere I have criticized such an approach; see Lovejoy, "The characteristics of plantations in the nineteenth-century Sokoto Caliphate (Islamic West Africa)," 1273–4. It should also be noted that Johnson has combined the labor obligations of slaves during the precolonial and early colonial periods. The "rent" on land, which she includes in her discussion of "feudal" obligations, replaced earlier payments once the French had abolished slavery and encouraged other forms of servility. I wish to thank Martin Klein for discussing this matter with me. For the slave population at Jenne, see Klein, "Women in slavery in the western Sudan", 69.
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24. Caillié, *Travels through Central Africa to Timbuctoo*, vol. i, 182.
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26. O'Sullivan, "Slavery in the Malinke kingdom of Kbadougou (Ivory Coast)," 636, 640–7; and Boutillier, "Les captives en A.O.F. (1903–1905)," 528.
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28. Marie Étienne Peroz, *Au Soudan français* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1889), 353. Also see Person, *Samori: une révolution Dyula*, vol. II, 836–9, 860 fn.
29. Klein, "Slave systems of the western Sudan."
30. Boutillier, "Les captives en A.O.F. (1903–1905)," 266, although Boutillier calculates the figure at 44 percent. Also see Klein, "Slave systems of the western Sudan."

31. Klein, "Slave systems of the western Sudan."
32. Boutillier, "Les captives en A.O.F. (1903–1905)," 260, 258–9.
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- Nature: An Eco-Cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
50. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Bawele mwa Mumbanza, "The social context of slavery in equatorial Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 72–98.
 51. W. G. Clarence-Smith, "Slaves, commoners and landlords in Bulozì, c. 1875 to 1906," *Journal of African History* 20:2 (1979), 219–34.
 52. Jean-Luc Vellut, "Notes sur le Lunda et la frontière luso-africaine," *Études d'histoire africaine* 3 (1972), 74–8.
 53. Maurice Bloch, "Modes of production and slavery in Madagascar: two case studies," in James L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 100–34; Bloch, "The social implications of freedom for Merina and Zafimaniry Slaves," in Raymond Kent, ed., *Madagascar in History* (Albany, CA: Foundation for Malagasy Studies, 1979), 269–97; Alfred Grandidier, "L'affranchissement des negres africains à Madagascar," *Bulletin de la société de géographie de Marseille* (1877), 389–94; R. Ratsimamanga, *De la condition de l'esclavage à Madagascar* (Montpellier, 1933).
 54. Bloch, "Modes of production and slavery in Madagascar," 109–10.
 55. Bloch, "Modes of production and slavery in Madagascar," 106–11.
 56. A. Tuden, "Slavery and stratification among the Ila of central Africa," in A. Tuden and L. Plotnicov, eds., *Social Stratification in Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1970), 49.
 57. Pierre Bonnafé, "Les Formes d'asservissement chez les Kukuya d'Afrique centrale," in Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: Maspero, 1975), 52–55; Louis Adolphe Cureau, *Les Sociétés primitives de l'Afrique équatoriale* (Paris: A. Colin, 1912); Charles R. P. Tisserant, *Ce que j'ai connu de l'esclavage en Oubangui-Chari* (Paris, 1955); C. M. N. White, "Clan, chieftainship, and slavery in Luvalé political organization," *Africa* 27:1 (1957), 59–73; P. P. Rey, "Articulation des modes de dépendance et des modes de reproduction dans deux sociétés lignagères (Punu et Kunyi du Congo-Brazzaville)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 9 (1969), 415–40; Rey, "L'Esclavage lignager chez les tsangui, les punu, et les kuni du Congo-Brazzaville," in Meillassoux, *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, 509–28; Mary Douglas, "Matriliny and pawnship in Central Africa," *Africa* 34:4 (1964), 301–13; E. De Jonghe and J. Vanhove, *Les Formes d'asservissement dans les sociétés indigènes du Congo Belge* (Brussels, 1949); E. De Jonghe, "A propos de l'esclavage au Congo," *Bulletin de l'Institut royal colonial belge* 4:1 (1933a), 65–88; L. Donny, "Vers la suppression complète de l'esclavage au Congo Belge," *Bulletin de la société belge d'études coloniales* 18 (1911), 177–210; R. P. De Beaucorps, "L'Asservissement chez les Basongo de la Luniumga et de la Gobari," *Bulletin des Jurisdictions Indigènes et du Droit Coutumier Congolais* 6 (1945), 161–6; F. Denolf, "De slaven bij de Basho, Bakuba en Baluba," *Revue general de la colonie belge* 2 (1938), 67–79, 197–212, 296–308; Joseph C. Miller, "Lineages, ideology and the history of slavery in western central Africa," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 60–3; and Jewsiewicki and Mumbanza, "The social context of slavery in equatorial Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," 79–88.

58. The Isaacmans argue this point persuasively for the patrilineal Sena of the Zambezi valley; see Barbara Isaacman and Allen Isaacman, "Slavery and social stratification among the Sena of Mozambique: a study of the Kaporo system," in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 105–20.
59. A. Schulz and A. Hammar, *The New Africa: A Journey up the Chobe and down the Okavango Rivers: A Record of Exploration and Sport* (London, 1897), 354, as cited in Thomas Tiou, "Servility and political control: Bothanka among the Batawana of northwestern Botswana, ca. 1750–1906," in Miers and Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa*, 383.
60. John H. Weeks, *Among the Primitive Bakongo* (New York: 1969), 97. Also see Wyatt MacGaffey, "Economic and social dimensions of Kongo slavery (Zaire)," in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 235–57; and Harms, *River of Sorrow*.
61. Heywood, *Contested Power*, explores the same type of formation in the Benguela highlands in the second half of the nineteenth century.
62. Harries, "Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction: the nature of free and unfree labour in south-east Africa," 318–29.
63. Jan Vansina, *The Children of Woot: A History of the Kuba Peoples* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 165–8, 105; and Hermann von Wissmann, *My second Journey through Equatorial Africa from the Congo in the Zambesi*, trans. Minna J. A (London: Bergmann, 1891), 145.
64. Jewsiewicki and Mumbanza, "Social context of slavery in equatorial Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," 75–6.
65. For a similar argument, see Paul Robert Thomas and Richard Bean, "The fishers of men – the profit of the slave trade," *Journal of Economic History* 34:4 (1974), 885–914.

11. The Abolitionist Impulse

1. This analysis draws heavily on Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1975); François Renault, *Lavigerie, l'esclavage africain, et l'Europe 1868–1892* (2 vols.) (Paris: Boccard, 1971); John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975), 22–62; and R. M. A. Van Zwanenberg, "Anti-slavery, the ideology of 19th century imperialism in East Africa," *Hadith* 5 (1976), 108–27. Also see Takena Tamuno, "Emancipation in Nigeria," *Nigeria Magazine* 82 (1964), 218–27; Christopher Fyfe, "Reform in West Africa: the abolition of the slave trade," in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1974), vol. II, 30–56; D. E. Moses Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery in East Africa* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1975); and L. H. Gann, "The end of the slave trade in British central Africa, 1889–1912," *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal* 16 (1954), 27–51.
2. Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'slavery' as an institution of marginality," in S. Miers and I. Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 4–5, 17; Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 118–20; and Igor Kopytoff, "Commentary one," *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 6:1 (1979), 70.

3. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 250. Also see Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade: The Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1949), 275–6; and U. J. Johnson Asiegbu, *Slavery and the Politics of Liberation, 1787–1861: A Study of Liberated African Emigration and British Anti-Slavery Policy* (London: Longman, 1969), 191–214.
4. *Instructions*, 1844 and 1866 editions, as cited in Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 118.
5. Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 21–65, 220–60.
6. Fyfe, “Reform in West Africa: the abolition of the slave trade,” 47–52; Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Brazil, 17th–19th Century*, trans. Evelyn Crawford (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1976), 442–3.
7. Fyfe, “Reform in West Africa: the abolition of the slave trade,” 52–5; and Charles I. Foster, “The colonisation of free Negroes in Liberia,” *Journal of Negro History* 38:1 (1953), 60.
8. Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 175–9, 262–3; and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade, 1700–1900* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980), 11–14.
9. As cited in Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 137.
10. As cited in Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 157. A similar policy was informally pursued in Sierra Leone, although the British government refused to ratify an extradition treaty between Freetown and Loko Temne in 1836, and in 1841 it was officially made clear that fugitive slaves would not be returned to their masters (Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 62 fn.).
11. Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth century*, 679–80.
12. Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 23–7; Susan B. Kaplow, “Primitive accumulation and traditional social relations on the nineteenth century Gold Coast,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12:1 (1978), 29–30; Raymond E. Dumett, “Pressure groups, bureaucracy and the decision-making process: the case of slavery abolition and colonial expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874,” *Journal of Commonwealth History* 9:2 (1981), 214 fn.; G. M. McSheffrey, “Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901,” *Journal of African History* 23 (1983), 349–68; and Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century*, 219, quoting a letter from Kwaku Dua to Pine, February 9, 1863, which explains the agreement signed by Maclean for the extradition of fugitive slaves to Asante.
13. As quoted in G. M. McSheffrey, “Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901.”
14. E. A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis* (London: Heinemann, 1966), 23–4, 26; E. J. Alagoa, “Nineteenth century revolutions in the eastern delta states and Calabar,” *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 5:4 (1971), 565–74; Kannan Nair, *Politics and Society in Southeastern Nigeria, 1841–1906* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 37, 46–55; and A. J. H. Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 102–9.
15. Campbell to Malmesbury, 4 March 1859, FO 84/1088, as quoted in E. Adeniyi Oroge, “The fugitive slave crisis of 1859: a factor in the growth of anti-British feelings among the Yoruba,” *Odu* 12 (1975), 41.

16. Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 26. There were also fugitive slaves in Sierra Leone earlier in the century; see Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 62 fn., 78.
17. McCoskry to Russell, 3 September 1861, FO 84/1141, as quoted in E. Adeniyi Oroge, "The fugitive slave question in Anglo-Egba relations, 1861–1886," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 8:1 (1975), 63. Also see Verger, *Trade Relations between the Bight of Benin and Brazil*, 549.
18. Edward Reynolds, *Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807–1874* (Harlow: Longman, 1974), 120–1, for recruitment of slaves in the 1850s. Also see McSheffrey, "Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901." Grace (*Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 75–7) notes that many ex-slaves joined the Frontier Police in Sierra Leone, which was a force of 500 men in 1894.
19. E. Adeniyi Oroge, "The institution of slavery in Yorubaland with particular reference to the nineteenth century," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1971, 338–9, 363.
20. Marshall and Wolseley, 24 December 1873, CO. 879/6/39 No. 79, as quoted in A Norman Klein, "Inequality in Asante: a study of the forms and meaning of slavery and social servitude in pre- and early colonial Akan-Asante society and culture," Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 1980.
21. Chalmers to Strahan, 6 March 1875, CO. 96/115/2733, as quoted in McSheffrey, "Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901."
22. McSheffrey, "Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901."
23. J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria, 1841–1891* (London: Longmans, 1965), 104–5; and Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, 331–4.
24. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, 47; and Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1976), 102; and Latham, *Old Calabar, 1600–1891: The Impact of the International Economy upon a Traditional Society*, 102–9.
25. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, 77–110; and Elizabeth Isichei, *The Ibo People and the Europeans* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 65, 74, 91–2, 103–4.
26. Ayandele, *Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842–1914*, 84–6; and Isichei, *A History of the Igbo People*, 102.
27. McSheffrey, "Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901." Grace (*Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 276–85) provides a list of fugitive slaves at the Customs Post, Kironkeh, Sierra Leone, April 1896 to May 1897: of 187 fugitives, 136 claimed ill treatment as the reason for escape; 31 "desired freedom" and 23 feared the threat of sale.
28. A. E. Afigbo, "The eclipse of the Aro slaving oligarchy of south-eastern Nigeria, 1901–1927," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6:1 (1971), 3–24. Also see Philip A. Igbafe, "Slavery and emancipation in Benin, 1897–1945," *Journal of African History* 16:3 (1975), 409–29.
29. E. Adeniyi Oroge, "Iwofa: An historical survey of the Yoruba institution of indenture," *African Economic History*, 14 (1985), 75–106, and reprinted in Paul E.

- Lovejoy and Toyin Falola, eds., *Pawnship, Slavery and Colonialism in Africa* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 325–56. In the context of Lagos, also see A. G. Hopkins, “Economic imperialism in West Africa: Lagos, 1880–92,” *Economic History Review* 21:3 (1968), 580–606; and Hopkins, “The Lagos strike of 1897: an exploration in Nigerian labour history,” *Past and Present* 35 (1966), 133–55.
30. V. L. Cameron, “Slavery in Africa: the disease and the remedy,” *National Review* 10 (1888), 265. Also see Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery in East Africa*.
 31. Renault, *Lavigerie, l’esclavage africain, et l’Europe 1868–1892*, vol. I, 140–50; and Fred Morton, *Children of Ham: Freed Slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast, 1873 to 1907* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990). Also see G. A. Akinola, “Slavery and slave revolts in the Sultanate of Zanzibar in the nineteenth century,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6:2 (1972), 215–28.
 32. Morton, *Children of Ham*. For the northern coast, see Lee V. Cassanelli, “Social constructs on the Somali frontier: Bantu ex-slave communities in nineteenth-century Somaliland,” in Igor Kopytoff, ed., *The African Frontier, The Reproduction of Traditional African Societies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 216–38.
 33. Morton, *Children of Ham*.
 34. Morton, *Children of Ham*.
 35. Morton, *Children of Ham*.
 36. John Gray, “Zanzibar and the coastal belt, 1840–84,” in R. Oliver and G. Mathew, eds., *History of East Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 245; and Morton, *Children of Ham*.
 37. Renault, *Lavigerie, l’esclavage africain, et l’Europe 1868–1892*, vol. I, 140–50.
 38. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 155; Duff MacDonald, *Africana* (2 vols.) (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1882), vol. II, 29; and A. J. Hanna, *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia, 1859–95* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 4–10, 34–7, 56–9, 196–7.
 39. MacDonald, *Africana*, vol. II, 32.
 40. MacDonald, *Africana*, vol. II, 198–9.
 41. Renault, *Lavigerie, l’esclavage africain, et l’Europe 1868–1892*, vol. I, 184–98; Also see Marcia Wright, “Women in peril: a commentary on the life stories of captives in nineteenth century east central Africa,” *African Social Research* 20 (1975), 800–19.
 42. Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 300.
 43. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and mwa Bawele Mumbanza, “The social context of slavery in equatorial Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1981), 88–96.
 44. Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1908–1925* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).
 45. J. Duffy, *A Question of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); and W. G. Clarence-Smith, *Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in Southern Angola, 1840–1926* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
 46. F. Zuccarelli, “Le Régime des engagés à temps au Sénégal (1817–1848),” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 2 (1962), 420–61; and C. Fauré, “La Garrison européenne du Sénégal (1779–1858),” *Revue d’histoire des colonies* 8 (1920), 5–108.
 47. For a summary of French policy, see Richard Roberts and Martin Klein, “The Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the western Sudan,”

- Journal of African History* 21:3 (1981), 382–4; M'Baye Guèye, "La Fin de l'esclavage à Saint-Louis et à Gorée en 1848," *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, sér. B, 28 (1966), 3–4, 637–56; R. Pasquier, "A propos de l'émancipation des esclaves au Sénégal en 1848," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 54 (1967), 188–208; François Renault, "L'Abolition de l'esclavage au Sénégal: l'attitude de l'administration française 1848–1905," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 58 (1971), 5–81; Martin Klein, "The transition from slave labour to free labour: the case of Senegambia," Unpublished paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Halifax, 1981; and B. Olatunji Oloruntimehin, "The impact of the abolition movement on the social and political development of West Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," *African Notes* 7:1 (1971–2), 52.
48. David Hanson, "The Maccube of Fouta Toro," Unpublished MA thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1971, 22–4.
 49. Denise Bouche, *Les villages de liberté en Afrique noire française, 1887–1910* (Haye: Mouton, 1968), 58–64, 79–89, 146–53. The British established similar villages later; see G. O. Olusanya, "The freed slaves' homes – an unknown aspect of northern Nigerian social history," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3:3 (1966), 523–38.
 50. F de. Kersaint-Gilly, "Essai sur l'évolution de l'esclavage en Afrique occidentale française: son dernier stade au Soudan française," *Bulletin du Comité études historiques et scientifiques de l'AOF* 9 (1924), 469–78; A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 10, 272–3.
 51. Commandant Kita to Commandant Supérieur, 19 January 1891, 15 G 132. I wish to thank Martin Klein for this reference; see Klein, "Women in slavery in the western Sudan," in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 67–91. Also see Denise Bouche, *Les villages de liberté en Afrique noire française, 1887–1910* (Haye: Mouton, 1968), 80.
 52. As quoted in Richard Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).
 53. Gabriel Warburg, "Ideological and practical considerations regarding slavery in the Mahdist state and in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1881–1918," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 257–66. Also see Gabriel Baer, "Slavery and its abolition, in *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt*" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 161–89. For an analysis of the role of abolition in the history of the Nilotic Sudan, see 'Abbas Ibrahim Muhammad 'Ali, *The British, the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Sudan, 1820–1881* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972).
 54. Memorandum to Mudirs, enclosure in Cromer to Salisbury, 17 March 1899, F.O. 78/5022, as cited in Warburg, "Ideological and practical considerations regarding slavery in the Mahdist state and in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1881–1918," 258.
 55. Minute, 5 April 1900, on Moor to Chamberlain, no. 1 conf., 28 Jan. 1900, CO. 520/1, as quoted in Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade*, 294. For the origins of this proslavery sentiment as an aspect of British imperialism, see Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa*, 22, 40. Grace argues that Mary Kingsley, C. L. Temple, Lugard, and others combined a positive economic policy with a

- conservationist social policy in which slavery was one of many “native” institutions that should be allowed to function in modified form.
56. Frederick Lugard, *Instructions to Political and Other Officers, on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative* (London, 1906), 136. Also see F. Lugard, “Slavery under the British flag,” *The Nineteenth Century* 39 (1896), 335–55; and Nwulia, *Britain and Slavery in East Africa*, 173–5.
 57. Paul E. Lovejoy, “Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate,” in Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 233–6.
 58. Roberts and Klein, “Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the western Sudan,” 385–92.
 59. Lugard, *Instructions to Political and Other Officers, on Subjects Chiefly Political and Administrative*, 136.
 60. Roberts and Klein, “Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the western Sudan,” 386.
 61. Roberts and Klein, “Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the western Sudan,” 393. Also see John O’Sullivan, “Slavery in the Malinke kingdom of Kbadougou (Ivory Coast),” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13:4 (1981), 646, who reports that 8,000–9,000 slaves fled the Odienne area in 1907.
 62. Roberts and Klein, “Banamba slave exodus of 1905 and the decline of slavery in the western Sudan.”
 63. Sa’ad Abubakar, *The Lāmbi of Fombina: A Political History of Adamawa, 1809–1901* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1977), 151.
 64. Lovejoy, “Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate,” 229–32; and Michael Mason, “Captive and client labour and the economy of the Bida Emirate, 1857–1901,” *Journal of African History* 14:3 (1973), 464.
 65. For some aspects of the transition from slavery to other forms of labor, see U. J. Johnson Asiegbu, “British slave emancipation and ‘free’ labour recruitment from West Africa,” *Sierra Leone Studies* 26 (1970), 37–47; François Renault, *Libération d’esclaves et nouvelle servitude* (Abidjan: Nouvelles éditions africaines, 1976); Klein, “The transition from slave labour to free labour: the case of Senegambia,” and Timothy C. Weiskel, “Labor in the emergent periphery: from slavery to migrant labor among the Baule peoples, c. 1880–1925,” in Walter L. Goldfrank, ed., *The World System of Capitalism: Past and Present* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1979), 207–33.

12. Slavery in the Political Economy of Africa

1. A useful survey of the early literature can be found in David Seddon (ed.), *Relations of Production: Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology* (London: Frank Cass, 1978), which contains excerpts from the work of Maurice Godelier, Claude Meillassoux, Georges Dupré, Pierre Philippe Rey, and others. Also see Jean Suret-Canale, “Les Sociétés traditionnelles en Afrique Tropicale et le concept de mode de production asiatiques,” in Centre d’études et de recherches marxistes, *Sur le mode de production asiatique* (Paris, 1969), 101–33; Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 109–77; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “Research on an African mode of production,” *Critique of Anthropology* 4 (1975), 38–71; Emmanuel Terray, “Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: the case of the Abbron Kingdom

- of Gyaman,” *Economy and Society* 3 (1974), 315–45; Emmanuel Terray, “Classes and class consciousness in the Abron kingdom of Gyaman,” in Maurice Bloch, ed., *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology* (London: Malaby Press, 1975), 85–134; and Martin Klein and Paul E. Lovejoy, “Slavery in West Africa,” in H. A. Gemery and J. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 207–9.
2. Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm (New York: International Publishers, 1965); and Hindess and Hirst, *Pre-capitalist Modes of Production*.
 3. See especially, Terray, “Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: the case of the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman,” and Terray, “Classes and class consciousness in the Abron kingdom of Gyaman,” 85–134. Meillassoux recognized the importance of slavery without accepting its crucial role; see “Correspondence on slavery,” *Economy and Society* 7:3 (1978), 321–31; introduction to Meillassoux, ed., *L’Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: Maspero, 1975a) 18–21; and Meillassoux, “Rôle de l’esclavage dans l’histoire de l’Afrique occidentale,” *Anthropologie et Sociétés* 2:1 (1978b), 117–48. For a survey of this debate, see Klein and Lovejoy, “Slavery in West Africa,” 207–12; Frederick Cooper, “The problem of slavery in African studies,” *Journal of African History* 20:1 (1979), 103–25; and Robert Harms, “Slave Systems in Africa,” *History in Africa* 5 (1978), 327–35. Among other scholars who apply the concept “mode of production” to slavery, see Martin Klein, “Slave systems of the western Sudan,” Unpublished paper, University of Toronto, 1977; Martin Klein, “Slavery as an institution and slavery as a mode of production: some reflections on African data,” Unpublished seminar paper, University of Toronto, 1978; and Klein, “Female slavery in the western Sudan,” in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983). Also see Roberta Walker Kilkenny, “The slave mode of production: precolonial Dahomey,” in Donald Crummey and C. C. Stewart, eds., *Modes of Production in Africa: The Pre-colonial Era* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 157–73; and Maurice Bloch, “Modes of production and slavery in Madagascar: two case studies,” in James L. Watson, eds., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 100–34.
 4. Terray, “Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: the case of the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman,” 340.
 5. Terray, “Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: the case of the Abron kingdom of Gyaman,” 341. Also see Terray, “Classes and class consciousness in the Abron kingdom of Gyaman,” 85–134.
 6. Terray, “La Captivité dans le royaume abron du Gyaman,” 437.
 7. Terray has explored various aspects of this interaction in a number of his articles. Also see Terray, *Une histoire du royaume abron du Gyaman. Des origines à la conquête coloniale* (Paris, 1983).
 8. Jack Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 39–56.
 9. Morton, *Children of Ham, Freed Slaves and Fugitive Slaves on the Kenya Coast, 1873 to 1907* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), 398.

10. Harms, "Slave Systems in Africa," 327–35, Robert Harms, "Sustaining the system: Trading towns along the middle Zaire," in Claire Robertson and Martin Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 95–110.
11. Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery. The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
12. For various interpretations of this impact, see Albert van Dantzig, "Effects of the Atlantic slave trade on some West African societies," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 62 (1975), 1–2: 252–69; Basil Davidson, "Slaves or captives? some notes on fantasy and fact," in Nathan I. Huggins, Martin Kilson and Daniel M. Fox, eds., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), vol. 1, 54–73; Marion Johnson, "The Atlantic slave trade and the economy of West Africa," in Roger Anstey and P. E. H. Hair, eds., *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition: Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research* (Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. Occasional Series, vol. 2, 1976), 14–38, M. D. Kilson, "West African society and the Atlantic slave trade, 1441–1865," in Huggins, Kilson, and Fox, eds., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience*, vol. 1, 39–53; Dov Ronon, "On the African role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in Dahomey," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 11:1 (1971), 5–13; G. N. Uzogwe, "The slave trade and African societies," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 14:2 (1973), 187–212; J. D. Fage, "Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African History," *Journal of African History* 10:3 (1969), 393–404; C. C. Wrigley, "Historicism in Africa: slavery and state formation," *African Affairs* 70 (1971), 113–24; and Walter Rodney, "Slavery and other forms of social oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic slave trade," *Journal of African History* 7:4 (1966), 431–43.
13. M. I. Finley, "Slavery," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 14 (1968), 307–13.
14. Emmanuel Terray, "La Captivité dans le royaume abron du Gyaman," in Claude Meillassoux, ed., *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: Maspero, 1975), 437–48; Jean Bazin, "Guerre et servitude à Segou," in Meillassoux, ed., *L'Esclavage en Afrique précoloniale*, 135–82; and Richard Roberts, *Warriors, Merchants and Slaves: The State and the Economy in the Middle Niger Valley, 1700–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
15. R. A. Padgug, "Problems in the theory of slavery and slave society," *Science and Society* 40 (1976), 3–27, has examined the subordinate status of the Americas in the rise of capitalism by distinguishing slavery in three contexts: classical antiquity, Asiatic societies, and the Americas. For Padgug, slavery in the Americas was different from other slave systems because of the articulation with capitalism, but he fails to see that slavery in Africa represented a fourth system that was also associated with the rise of capitalism. My approach is indebted to Curtin's conceptual breakthrough in analyzing the interrelationship between African slave supply and productive slavery in the Americas as a "south Atlantic system," although Curtin did not carry his analysis as far as I do. Nonetheless, I consider the identification of a slave mode of production in Africa as the logical extension of Curtin's framework; see Philip D. Curtin, "Jihad in West Africa: early phases and interrelations in Mauritania and Senegal," *Journal of African History* 12:1 (1971), 11–24,

- and Curtin, "Slavery and empire," in V. Rubin and A. Tuden, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 3–11.
16. Ken Swindell, "Serawoollies, Tillibunkas and strange farmers: the development of migrant groundnut farming along the Gambia River, 1848–95," *Journal of African History* 21:1 (1980, 99).
 17. G. M. McSheffrey, "Slavery, indentured servitude, legitimate trade and the impact of abolition in the Gold Coast: 1874–1901," *Journal of African History* 23 (1983); Raymond E. Dumett, "Pressure groups, bureaucracy and the decision-making process: the case of slavery abolition and colonial expansion in the Gold Coast, 1874," *Journal of Commonwealth History* 9:2 (1981), 214 fn.; and Susan B. Kaplow, "Primitive accumulation and traditional social relations on the nineteenth century Gold Coast," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12:1 (1978), 29–30.
 18. Patrick Harries, "Slavery, social incorporation and surplus extraction: the nature of free and unfree labour in south-east Africa," *Journal of African History* 22:3 (1981), 317. In the Nilotic Sudan, migrant labor was available as a by-product of the pilgrimage traffic to Mecca, and agricultural producers were quick to realize the utility of pilgrim labor as a substitute for slave labor; see Gabriel Warburg, "Ideological and practical considerations regarding slavery in the Mahdist state and in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1881–1918," in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 265–6; Warburg, "Slavery and labour in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan," *Asian and African Studies* 12 (1978), 221–45; Peter F. M. McLoughlin, "Economic development and the heritage of slavery in the Sudan Republic," *Africa* 32 (1962), 355–91, McLoughlin, "Labour market conditions and wages in the Gash and Tokar deltas, 1900–1955," *Sudan Notes and Records* 42 (1966), 111–26; and McLoughlin, "Labour market conditions in the three towns, 1900–1950," *Sudan Notes and Records* 51 (1970), 105–18.
 19. E. A. Oroge, "Iwofa: An historical survey of the Yoruba institution of indenture," *African Economic History*, 14 (1985), 75–106, and reprinted in Paul E. Lovejoy and Toyin Falola, eds., *Pawnship, Slavery and Colonialism in Africa* (Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 2003), 325–56. Also see Henri Ortol, "Le Gagé des personnes au Soudan français," *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, sér. B (1939), 313–24.
 20. In an interesting thesis, Hillard Warren Pouncy examines the extent to which the labor code of Great Britain was imposed on West Africa. Vagrancy laws and other measures often reflected out-of-date metropolitan laws but were clearly conceived as the basis of a legal means to control labor, even though the laws themselves were seldom enforceable; see Hillard Warren Pouncy, "Colonial racial attitudes and colonial labor laws in British West Africa, 1815–1946," Unpublished PhD thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1981.
 21. Various authors have suggested a close connection between abolition and the ideology of imperialism; I have discussed this elsewhere; see "Slavery in the context of ideology," in Paul E. Lovejoy, *The Ideology of Slavery in Africa* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 26–7. Also see R. M. A. Van Zwanenberg, "Anti-slavery, the ideology of 19th century imperialism in East Africa," *Hadith* 5 (1976), 108–28; Howard Temperley, "Anti-slavery ideology," in David Eltis and James Walvin, eds., *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 21–35; and Warburg, "Ideological and practical

- considerations regarding slavery in the Mahdist state and in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1881–1918,” 257–66. B. Olatunji Oloruntimehin, “The impact of the abolition movement on the social and political development of West Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,” *African Notes* 7:1 (1971–2), 33–58, earlier argued that antislavery rhetoric was often merely propaganda, whereas Abbas Ibrahim Muhammad Ali, *The British, the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Sudan, 1820–1881* (Khartoum: Khartoum University Press, 1972), 3–129 has analyzed the statements of different observers in the Nilotic Sudan to demonstrate the underlying ambiguity of British policy.
22. For examples of the vast literature on abolition, see Thomas Fowell Buxton, *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* (London: John Murray, 1839); Victor Schoelcher, *L’Esclavage au Sénégal en 1880* (Paris: H.-E. Martin, 1880); E. C. André, *De l’esclavage à Madagascar* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1899); E. Berlioux, *The Slave Trade in Africa in 1872* (London: E Marsh, 1872); Berlioux, *La Traite orientale* (Paris: Librairie de Guillaumin et Cie, 1870); and A. Lacour, *L’Esclavage africain* (Dunkirk, 1889). Also see the discussion in Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (London: Longman, 1975); and François Renault, *Lavigerie, l’esclavage africain, et l’Europe 1868–1892* (2 vols.) (Paris: Boccard, 1971).
 23. See for example Myron J. Echenberg, “Paying the blood tax: military conscription in French West Africa, 1914–1929,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 9:2 (1975), 171–92 and Echenberg, “Les Migrations militaires en Afrique occidentale française, 1900–1945,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14:3 (1980), 429–50.
 24. See Jonathan Derrick, *Africa’s Slaves Today* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1975); Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century. The Evolution of a Global Problem* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003); and Benedetta Rossi, ed., *Reconfiguring Slavery. West African Trajectories* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).
 25. Based on my experience at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in 1974–1976.
 26. Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1908–1925* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).

Epilogue

1. Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
2. Paul E. Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
3. Benedetta Rossi, ed., *Reconfiguring Slavery: West African Trajectories* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009).
4. Suzanne Miers, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century: The Evolution of a Global Pattern* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
5. Joel Quirk, *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery* (Paris: UNESCO, 2009).

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Index

- ‘Abdallah, Caliph, 259
 ‘Ali, ‘Abbas Ibrahim Muhammad, 348, 353
 Aba, 178
 Abala, 178
 Abam, 143
 Abd-al-Rahmiin, 113, 166
 Abd el-Kader, 189
 Abdullahi, Caliph, 198
 Abease, 156
 Abeche, 202, 203, 215
 Abeokuta, 142, 158, 172, 174–176, 247, 288
 Abiodun, Alafin of Oyo, 98, 119
 Abiriba, 143
 Aboh, 58, 81, 85, 96, 100, 101, 121, 173, 177,
 178, 180, 181, 314, 331, 332
 abolition movement, 251, 253, 270, 321,
 348, 353
 Abomey, 172, 174
 Abray, Saleh b. Haramil al-, 222
 Abuakwa, 251
 Abuja, 156, 173
 Accra, 79, 81, 95, 96, 98, 251, 361
 acculturation, 2, 3, 14, 80, 111, 112, 155, 309
 See also assimilation
 achikunda, 132, 153, 222, 227–229, 326
 Ada, 251
 Adal region, 26, 28, 30, 70–71
 Adamawa region, 157, 186, 199, 215
 Adamu, Emir, 199
 administration, 5, 6, 9, 15, 33, 35, 97, 98, 100,
 111, 113, 119, 206, 216, 219, 304, 309,
 312, 313, 315, 317, 348, 361
 See also government
 Aduapem, 156
 Afenmai, 201, 326
 Afikpo, 96, 173
 Afonso I (Kongo), 38, 74, 85–86
 Afrikaners, 231
 See also Boers
 Agades, 26, 69
 Agaja, 79
 Agalawa, 213–215
 age variations, 5, 12–13, 63–65, 109, 137,
 139, 150
 agriculture, 9, 10, 34, 109, 112, 116, 118, 120,
 122, 124, 129, 133, 152, 155, 169, 174,
 177, 179, 188–191, 193, 195, 197, 209,
 217, 220, 221, 228–230, 233, 237, 239,
 240, 245, 264, 267, 272, 300, 337, 347,
 353, 356
 See also plantations
 Ahmad Baba, 32, 71, 86
 Ahmadu, Sheku, 192
 Air Massif, 25, 173, 212, 213, 215
 Aja, 78–80, 99, 309, 313
 Akaia, 180
 Akan, 12, 26, 33, 37, 42, 57, 58, 78, 80, 81,
 116–118, 122, 157, 165, 166, 169–171,
 219, 300, 310, 312, 313
 Akpa, 82
 Akwamu, 78–81, 95–98, 104, 117, 119, 156,
 304, 309, 312, 313, 315, 317
 Akwapim, 80, 251
 Akwete, 177, 178
 Akyem, 81, 117
 alcohol, 103, 106, 356

- Algeria, 25
 Alima valley, 236
 Allada, 55, 78–80, 95, 97, 122
 Althusser, Louis, 11, 295
 Alvares, Gaspar, 129
 Ambaca, 93, 94, 127, 230, 341
 Ambakistas, 221, 230
 Americas, 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 21, 22, 32, 37, 40, 47, 49, 52, 56, 58, 60–62, 68, 72–75, 88, 108, 114, 119, 120, 122, 126–133, 135–137, 140, 144, 146, 150–152, 155, 163, 169, 171, 176, 177, 182, 184, 219–221, 238, 247, 270, 271, 273–276, 279, 281–284, 351, 356
See also trans-Atlantic trade; United States; Brazil
 Amin, Samir, 11
 Anago, 79
 Anomabu, 19, 57, 97, 173
 Ananaba, Chief, 178
 Angoche, 94, 226, 227
 Angola, 9, 12, 46–49, 52, 53, 59, 62–65, 76, 101, 103, 106, 108, 109, 125, 128, 129, 131, 138, 145, 219, 220, 230, 233, 282, 298, 301–303, 306, 308, 311, 312, 315, 316, 319, 320, 322–324, 341, 347
 Anjouin Island, 220
 Annie Pepple family (establishment?), 252
 Annur, 212, 213
 Antigua, 47
See also West Indies
 Apa, 55, 80, 97
 Apatira, Braimah, quoted, 176
 apprenticeship, 15, 181, 215, 221, 231–233, 258, 287
 Arabia, 15, 17, 22, 34, 68, 89, 90, 149–152, 205, 221, 224, 288, 291
 Ardrah, 96
 Argungu, 156, 173
 Aro, 78, 82, 83, 96, 100, 101, 121, 143, 144, 177–179, 181, 183, 253, 310, 314, 331, 346, 357, 361
 Aro Chukwu, 82, 83, 96, 178, 179, 181, 183, 253
 Arondizuogu, 178
 Asaba, 178, 181
 Asante, 57, 60, 67, 68, 78, 81, 84, 91, 92, 96–98, 101, 105, 106, 116–119, 133, 147, 148, 156, 157, 161–171, 173, 195, 196, 198, 215, 218, 248–251, 267, 268, 277, 289, 301, 304, 310, 312, 313, 318, 322, 324, 326, 328, 329, 345, 346, 355, 362
 Asia, 21, 68, 128, 130, 299, 355, 356
 assimilation, 7, 8, 14, 16, 43, 124, 133, 155, 162, 169–172, 176, 181, 183, 213, 214, 218, 238, 282
 Assin Manso, 97
 Assiout, 25, 26
 Aswan, 148
 Atakora mountains, 80
 Atebubu, 156
 Austen, Ralph, 25, 27, 46
 Azumiri, 177, 178

 Babalay, Hasan, 215
 Babatu, 218
 Babemba, 158, 192, 265
 Badagry, 55, 56, 80, 97, 98, 252, 288
 Badi II, 113
 Bafoulabe, 187
 Bagirmi, 156, 202, 205, 215
 Bahr el Ghazal region, 149, 203–204
 Bahr el Jebel region, 149, 203
 Bakel, 264
 Balle, 211
 Bamako, 91, 158, 173, 209
 Bambara states, 90, 112
 Bambuhu, 11, 33, 37, 112
 Bamenda plateau, 144
 Banamba, 173, 191, 192, 208, 211, 264, 332–334, 347, 349
 bananas, 190
 Bandama (river/region?) valley, 26, 48, 56–57, 164, 170–171, 194
 Bandiagara, 187, 192, 193
 Bantu, 243, 244, 326, 347
 Banyo, 157, 173
 Bapoto, 236
 Barbados, 47
See also West Indies
 Bariba states, 79, 80, 91, 104
 Barreira, Father Baltasar, 43
 Barth, Heinrich, quoted, 195, 212, 335
 Barue, 228
 Basel Mission, 252, 253
See also missionaries
 Bassa, 201
 Bauchi, 156, 197, 199, 217, 336
 Baule, 57, 78, 170, 171, 304, 329, 349
 Bawol, 190
 Bean, R., 51–52
 Beecham, J., quoted, 167–168
 beeswax, 102, 136, 145, 233, 234, 268
 Belgians, 250, 253, 254, 258
 Bende, 100
 Bengal, 105

- Bengo River, 53
- Benguela, 18, 19, 46, 48, 64, 76, 94, 122, 126, 127, 129, 131, 234, 241, 298, 319, 322, 324, 344, 356
- Benin, 18, 26, 38, 39, 42, 47, 49, 50, 54–58, 60, 64, 77–79, 81, 95, 96, 99, 103, 104, 106, 107, 115, 116, 120, 122, 134, 139–143, 154, 160, 164, 173, 174, 247, 276, 298, 301, 303, 304, 311–313, 315, 327, 330, 345, 346, 359, 362
- Benquey, quoted, 166
- Benue valley, 199, 200
- Berbera, 149, 203, 288
- Berbers, 31, 33
- Beriberi, 90, 91
- Betsimisaraka, 77
- Biafra, 20, 26, 48–50, 58, 60, 63–65, 78, 81, 82, 95, 96, 99–103, 107, 116, 120, 122, 134, 138–141, 143, 144, 154, 160–162, 164, 173, 177–179, 182, 184, 247, 276, 304, 305, 323, 331, 356, 358, 359, 361, 362
- See also* Bight of Biafra
- Bibemi, 157, 173
- Bida, 156, 173, 200, 201, 335, 336, 349
- Bight of Benin, 18, 26, 38, 39, 47, 49, 50, 54–58, 77–79, 81, 95, 96, 99, 104, 106, 115, 116, 120, 122, 134, 139, 142, 143, 154, 173, 174, 276, 298, 303, 304, 311–313, 315, 327, 330, 345, 346, 362
- See also* Slave Coast
- Bight of Biafra, 20, 48–50, 58, 78, 81, 82, 95, 99–102, 116, 120, 122, 134, 138, 143, 144, 154, 173, 177, 304, 305, 323, 331, 356, 358, 361, 362
- Bighu, 26, 39, 81, 118
- Bihe, 94
- Bilma, 26, 34, 173, 212
- bin Abdullah al-Mauli, Suleiman, 224
- bin Juma bin Said, Mohamed, 223
- bin Salim, Abdalla, 223
- Binger, L.-G., quoted, 165, 166, 328
- Birnin Kebbi, 195
- Bissandugu, 173, 194
- Blantyre, 94, 256, 257
- Bobo-Julasso, 173, 195
- Boer War, 221
- Boers, 221, 232, 233, 342
- Bonaparte, Louis, 146
- Bonduku, 165, 166, 173
- Bonny, 18, 19, 58, 78, 81, 96, 99–101, 121, 173, 177–182, 252, 253
- Bono-Mansu, 81
- Borno, 26–31, 66, 67, 69–72, 86, 89, 91, 96, 113, 150, 156, 157, 173, 186, 196, 198, 202, 205, 215, 259, 287, 300, 307, 314
- Boron, 57
- Bougouni, 187, 265
- Bouka, 114
- Bourbon Island, 147, 222
- See also* Mascarene Islands
- Boutillier, J.-L., 195
- Bowdich, Thomas quoted, 167–168
- brass, 104, 105, 178, 180, 253
- Brass (Niger delta), 48, 58, 67, 78, 81, 82, 99, 104, 105, 115, 121, 143, 144, 161, 177, 178, 180, 181, 192, 252, 253, 273, 305, 310, 313, 318, 355, 357
- Brazil, 47, 60, 129, 136, 143, 146, 172, 230, 282, 287, 288, 290, 315, 345, 346, 356, 362
- Breviè, J., 209
- Britain, 51, 135, 136, 220, 231, 237, 246, 248, 286–290, 321, 322, 325, 326, 344, 345, 347–349, 352, 353, 355, 360, 361
- See also* Great Britain
- British navy, 140, 144, 161
- Brun, Samuel, quoted, 116, 317
- Bubakar, 260
- Bulobo, 236
- Buna, 173, 195, 326, 327, 335
- Bure, 26, 112
- Buriya, 187
- Cabinda, 18, 19, 52, 53, 93, 94, 145
- Cadamosto, A., 29, 32, 36
- Caillie, Rene, quoted, 190, 193, 210
- Cairo, 26, 90, 148, 215, 305, 324, 362
- Calabar, 19, 58, 78, 81, 96, 99–101, 121, 173, 177–182, 249, 250, 252, 305, 310, 313, 331, 332, 345, 346, 359, 362
- Cambambe, 93
- See also* Dondo
- Cambaya, 190
- camels, 29, 208, 210, 212, 213
- Cameron, V.L., 254, 347
- Cameroon, 195, 196, 361
- Campbell, Benjamin, 249
- Canary Islands, 36
- cannibalism, 75, 124, 258
- Cape Coast, 19, 57, 62, 96, 97, 164, 173, 328
- Cape Town, 60, 94, 128, 129, 219–221, 231, 232, 320, 321, 341, 342
- Cape Verde Islands, 36, 38, 43, 104

- caravans, 16, 72, 89, 93, 98, 102, 110,
148–150, 153, 158, 161, 165, 191, 200,
211, 215, 235, 311, 329, 338, 345, 359
- Carneiro, Antonio, 40
- cassava, 145, 164, 190, 208, 236
- castration, 6, 7, 35
- cattle, 114, 115, 131, 212, 232, 239, 242
See also livestock
- Caulker family, 116, 164
- Cavazzi, 123
- Cazengo district, 230
- Ceylon (Sri Lanka), 105
- Chad, 25–27, 31, 39, 67, 69, 70, 102, 113,
115, 155, 195, 196, 202, 259, 337, 338
- Chamberlain, Joseph, 262
- Cheringoma, 133
- children, 2, 6–8, 10, 12–17, 20, 27, 30, 33–35,
43, 60, 63–65, 70–72, 109, 111, 113, 118,
119, 124, 126, 127, 133, 134, 137, 139,
142–144, 150, 162, 167, 170–172, 176,
177, 181, 183, 187, 190, 204, 207, 214,
216, 228, 232–234, 236, 238–242, 251,
254, 257, 259, 260, 263, 269–272, 275,
278, 283, 290, 294, 306, 339, 344, 347,
350, 356, 357, 360–362
demand for
social status, 15, 110
- China, 68
- Chomyel Abba, 200
- Christianity, 38, 70, 71, 131, 163, 176, 246,
247, 251, 252, 255
See also missionaries
- Church Missionary Society (CMS), 247,
251–256, 285, 290, 330–331
See also missionaries
- Church of Scotland, 256
See also missionaries
- Clapperton, Hugh, quoted, 206, 287, 337
- clientage, 5, 115, 229
- cloth, 51, 104, 125, 170, 197, 207, 208, 211,
229, 335, 337, 358, 359
See textiles
- cloves, 136, 152, 220–223
See spices
- CMS, 247, 252, 254, 255, 256, 290
See Church Missionary Society
- coconuts, 152, 221, 224
- coffee, 8, 61, 147, 227, 230, 234, 341
- Cokwe, 94, 145, 158, 222, 233, 234, 237, 241,
324, 342
- commerce, 9, 24, 36–38, 88, 90, 91, 95, 99,
100, 102, 103, 110, 116, 122, 136, 138,
161, 177, 182, 184, 185, 196, 215, 216,
229, 236, 246, 261, 273, 298, 311, 320,
322, 323, 356, 359–361
See trade
- Comoe valley, 26, 56–57, 167, 170, 173
- Comoro Islands, 77, 286, 288
- Company of Royal Adventurers, 101
- concubines, 2, 6, 7, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24,
30, 32, 34, 88, 111, 115, 128, 176,
214–216, 237
- Congo, 9, 12, 19, 38–41, 53, 54, 73, 76, 93,
94, 106, 111, 122, 131, 145, 147, 155,
186, 225, 233–236, 242, 250, 254, 258,
269, 273, 290, 301–303, 308, 311, 312,
319, 320, 324, 327, 341–344, 362
- contract labor, 146–147, 154, 230, 232
- Cooper, F., 294, 297, 325, 326, 339, 356
- copper, 11, 92, 95, 102–105, 126, 153, 225
See also mining
- copra, 224, 226
See also Gum
See copra
- Corker, Thomas, 116, 164
- corvee labour, 35, 236
- Costa Soares, Candido da, 227
- cotton, 8, 12, 32, 114, 189–191, 196, 197, 199,
206, 208, 209, 214, 217, 220, 230, 234
- cowrie shells, 51
- criminals, 4, 16, 43, 72, 84, 85, 87, 107, 120,
121, 125, 128
- crops, 32, 42, 68, 117, 131, 152, 161, 165,
175, 177, 179, 197, 206–208, 220, 222,
224, 226, 229, 236, 258, 260, 283
See also agriculture
- Cross River, 48, 58, 67, 78, 81, 82, 83, 105,
115, 143, 177, 182
- Crowther, Samuel, 142, 176, 180
- Curtin, Philip D., 18, 48, 107, 293, 297–303,
305–307, 310, 311, 314–319, 323, 324,
337, 345, 351, 352, 356
- Da, 38, 123, 124, 133, 227, 299, 301, 341
- da Busseto, Giuseppe Maria, 124
- da Cruz, Nicolau Pascoal, 133
- da Roma, Giovanni Francesco, 123
- Dagomba, 156, 157
- Dahomey, 54–57, 67, 68, 78–80, 91, 92,
95–99, 101, 104, 105, 115, 120, 122,
133, 142, 158, 161, 162, 171–174, 177,
219, 288, 297, 303, 304, 306, 309, 313,
315, 316, 318, 322, 323, 330, 350, 351,
360, 361
- Damagaram, 212, 335
- Damergu, 212, 213

- Dan Marina, quoted, 71
 Danaqla, 204
 Dande River, 129
 Daoud, Askia, 33
 Dapper O., 16
 Dar es Salaam, 67, 226
 Dar Fongoro, 113
 Dar Fur, 25, 26, 70, 89, 92, 113–115, 148, 202, 203, 205, 215, 216, 307, 311
 Dar Runga, 215
 Dar Sila, 215
 Daym Zubayr, 204
 de Marees, P., 42
 death, 2, 4, 7, 17, 22, 35, 36, 62, 86, 100, 112, 117, 119, 124, 162, 181, 235, 240, 241, 254, 256, 257, 266, 281, 282, 290, 353, 359, 360
 sacrifices, 4, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 83, 116, 118, 121, 124, 126, 181, 182, 183, 235, 237, 242–243, 249, 252–253, 258, 273
 debtors, 42, 72, 87, 204
 Delagoa Bay, 233, 242
 Dendi, 33
 Denkyira, 81, 96, 117, 170
 Denmark, 135, 285, 290
 Dida, 170
difcane (also mfecane), 153, 158, 222, 228, 229, 233, 239, 241–242
 Dimar, 260, 289
 Dinguiraye, 187
 Dinka, 149
 Dokonkade, 166
 domestic slaves, 14, 18, 34, 144, 171, 182, 183, 212, 215, 251, 254, 260
 Dondo, 93, 94, 230
 Dongola, 149, 203
 Dori, 187
 Douglas, M., 296, 343
 Doulabi, 200
 drought, 29, 69, 70, 93, 114, 185, 211, 212, 228, 307
 Duala, 180
 Dunzu, 187
 Dupuis, J., quoted, 167, 328
 Dutch, 48, 53, 60, 62, 68, 75, 93, 97, 101, 105, 118, 128–132, 146–148, 156, 220, 231, 248, 298, 304, 306, 321, 357, 362
 Dutch East India Co., 130
 traders, 36–38, 40, 43, 56, 57, 59, 80, 83, 85, 89, 91, 92, 95, 97–101, 121, 129, 153, 165, 167, 172, 179, 182, 226, 228, 231, 326, 335, 341, 357
 East Indies, 148
 Edda, 143
 Efusetan, Madam, 175
 Egba United Improvement Association (EUIA), 247
 See also missionaries
 Egbado, 79, 98, 119
 Egbulefu, Olujie, 178
 Egypt, 25, 28, 30, 60, 89, 90, 92, 148–150, 202, 204, 205, 288, 289, 305, 324, 325, 348, 362
 El Obeid, 149, 203
 Elaiji, 213
 Elem Kalabari (*also* New Calabar), 58, 81, 99, 121, 178, 180
 (New Calabar), 58
 Elmina, 19, 26, 38, 39, 57, 96, 97, 164, 173
 Eltis, David 18, 19, 37, 46, 47, 48, 50, 55, 63, 78, 139, 141, 151, 293, 297, 303, 322, 329, 337, 352, 357
 Elton, Frederic, 227, 340
 emancipation, 2, 7, 8, 14, 16, 17, 136, 172, 181, 182, 207, 213, 214, 216, 217, 220, 221, 231–235, 240–242, 245, 246, 250, 252, 253, 256, 258, 260, 262, 263, 270, 274, 278, 279, 281, 282, 287, 289, 290, 320, 321, 327, 335, 336, 342, 344, 346, 348, 349, 357, 361
 See also assimilation
 Emmer, P.C., 147, 324
 Encoje, 93
 engages a temps, 146, 220, 221, 259, 261, 324, 347
 enslavement, 3, 4, 6–10, 15, 21–24, 28–32, 35, 41–45, 52, 55, 57, 59, 62–81, 83–87, 107–109, 112, 114, 115, 119, 121–124, 126, 127, 135, 140, 142–146, 150, 153, 155–160, 162, 176, 184, 185, 193, 194, 205, 218, 230, 234, 235, 237, 238, 241–244, 251, 261, 262, 267–274, 278, 281–284, 296, 302, 306, 310, 316, 359
 See also criminals; debtors; prisoners of war; raids
 Enugwu-Ukwu, 144
 Epe, 55, 80, 97, 98
 Equiano, Olaudah (Gustavus Vassa) 85, 120, 310, 318
 Ethiopia, 11, 12, 24, 26, 28, 33, 34, 67, 69–71, 89, 90, 92, 102, 137, 148–150, 154, 185, 186, 205, 216, 259, 289, 291, 299, 300, 307, 311, 312, 314, 316, 325, 337
 eunuchs, 5, 8, 17, 20, 27, 35, 60, 115, 119

- Europe, 15, 22, 32, 36, 37, 46, 51, 68, 73, 88, 105, 131, 135, 136, 140, 160, 161, 165, 172, 174, 185, 200, 210, 221, 244, 245, 261, 274–276, 290, 298–300, 322, 326, 340, 344, 347, 353, 361
- Ewe, 156, 157
- export of slaves, 32, 54, 68, 74, 79–81, 119, 133, 142, 165, 210, 246, 269, 270, 273, 286, 287
- See also* Trans-Atlantic trade
- Fachi oasis, 173, 212
- Fadlallah, Rabeh, 155, 156, 186, 205, 259, 264, 326, 337
- See* Rabeh Fadlallah
- Fage, J.P., 301–303, 351
- families (slave) 206, 269
- famine, 35, 69, 70, 150, 168, 218, 228, 234
- Fanisau, 199, 296
- Fante, 81, 97, 98, 156, 251
- Faran-Taka, 33
- farmers, 12, 29, 75, 115, 120, 131, 144, 166, 175–177, 189, 190, 197, 205, 207, 209, 212, 221, 225, 228, 230, 231, 233, 235, 247, 253, 276, 280, 333, 337, 352
- See* peasants
- Fernandes do Rozario, Joao, 133
- Fernandes, Valentim, quoted, 33
- Fernando de Jesus Maria, 132, 321
- Fernando Po Island, 138, 143, 161
- Fernkodogo, 187
- Finley, M.L. quoted, 9, 10, 17, 18, 272, 294, 295, 351
- firearms, 106
- fish, 231
- Fombina, 199, 327, 336, 337, 349
- See* Adamawa region
- Forbes, F.E., quoted, 172, 174, 330
- France, 136, 220, 222, 246, 285–290, 356
- Freetown, 49, 163, 164, 173, 246, 247, 260, 285, 345
- French in Africa, 48, 56, 60, 61, 76, 77, 93, 105, 126, 128, 143, 146, 147, 158, 165, 166, 186, 189, 191, 192, 193, 194, 209, 214, 220
- French Revolution, 136
- Frere Town, 255, 256
- fugitive slaves, 248, 250, 252, 254–256, 260, 264, 279, 285, 289, 290, 294, 339, 345–347, 350, 360
- Fuladoyo, 255, 256
- Fulbe, 114, 115, 191, 192, 196, 199
- Funj Sultanate of Sennar, 67, 89, 113, 202
- See* Sennar
- Futa Jallon, 48, 59, 73, 90, 96, 114, 116, 163, 173, 188, 190, 191, 194, 197, 293, 308, 317
- Futa Toro, 73, 96, 114, 173, 188, 189, 260
- Futa Bondu, 73
- Gabon, 146, 288
- Gaha, Basorun, of Oyo, 98, 119
- Galla, 28, 71, 150, 186, 205
- Gambaga, 218
- Gambia valley, 59, 191
- Gamitto, A.C.P., quoted, 228, 340
- Ganjuwa, 113
- Gao, 31, 32, 187
- Gasi, 224, 225, 255
- Gaza, 242
- Gbari, 201
- Gbuipe, 118
- George Pepple I (Bonny), 252
- Germans, 250, 258, 290
- Gezawa, 213
- Ghadames oasis, 25, 89, 212
- Ghana, 25, 29, 30, 90, 299, 301, 309, 327, 328, 351, 355, 358, 361
- Ghat oasis, 25, 26, 212
- Ghehwe, 97
- See* Ouidah
- Ginga, 93, 125
- See* Matamba
- Girei, 200
- Gneretemile, 190
- Goa, 146, 221
- Gobir, 31, 72, 91, 197
- See also* Hausa states
- Gobirawa, 91
- gold, 8, 11, 12, 21, 26, 27, 32–34, 36–38, 42, 46, 48–50, 56–59, 62–64, 67, 71, 76, 78–81, 84, 91, 95–98, 102–105, 112, 115–119, 122, 128, 132, 134, 136–138, 140, 146, 148, 160, 161, 163–165, 167–169, 191, 193, 195, 212, 228, 248–253, 267, 268, 276, 277, 289, 293–295, 297, 298, 300, 301, 304, 309, 310, 312–315, 317, 320, 322, 328, 329, 345, 346, 351, 352, 355–358, 360
- See also* mining
- Gold Coast, 12, 26, 37, 38, 42, 46, 48–50, 56–59, 62, 64, 67, 78–81, 91, 95, 97, 98, 102–104, 115, 116, 118, 128, 134, 137, 138, 140, 160, 161, 163–165, 248–253,

- 276, 277, 289, 293, 297, 298, 300, 301, 304, 309, 312, 313, 317, 320, 322, 328, 329, 345, 346, 352, 355–358
- Colomba, 200
- Gonja, 81, 96, 156, 157, 165, 166
- Goree Island, 259
- Gorongosa, 133
- government, 8, 16, 17, 20, 30, 32, 34, 40, 52, 55, 60, 71, 75, 80, 84, 89, 93, 95, 98, 99, 101, 107, 110, 111, 114, 115, 117, 123, 135, 149, 162, 166–169, 171, 174, 184, 192, 193, 195, 196, 198, 203, 206, 216, 227, 232, 236, 247–249, 255–257, 259–261, 263, 265, 285, 321, 324, 335, 336, 345
- grain, 33, 37, 115, 152, 189, 191–193, 196, 199, 200, 204, 206–212, 217, 221, 224–227
- Grand Bassam, 57, 97, 116
- Grand Lahou, 57, 97, 116
- Great Britain, 135, 136, 220, 231, 246, 248, 352
See also British navy: traders, British
- Guadeloupe, 47
See also West Indies
- Guinea coast, 12, 18, 36, 41, 43, 45, 48, 49, 53, 59, 68, 72, 91, 103, 109, 113, 115, 122, 128, 129, 134, 135, 140, 141, 154, 163, 164, 219, 220, 247, 248, 270, 271, 275, 293, 296–298, 301–303, 305, 314, 315, 320, 328, 351, 361
- gum, 102, 136, 161, 185, 209, 210, 224, 226, 268
Arabic, 102, 136, 161, 185, 209, 210, 268, 317
- copra, 224, 226
- Gumbu, 173, 192, 211, 264, 333, 334
- Gurin, 200
- Gurma, 157
- Guro, 57, 170
- Gurunsi, 157, 218
- Gwandu, 142, 155, 156, 186, 195, 197, 198
- Gwembe valley, 229, 341
- Gyaman, 81, 96, 166, 167, 267, 295, 300, 317, 318, 328, 329, 350, 351
- Hadejia, 186
- Haidara family, 211
- Hamdullahi, 155, 173, 188, 192, 193
See Masina
- Hanwa, 199
- harems, 16, 17, 34, 60, 68, 70, 111, 113, 174, 175, 196, 206, 226, 278
- Harms, R., 269, 294, 313, 324, 342, 344, 350, 351, 358
- Hausa Armed Police Force, 250
- Hausa states, 29, 71
- Hawkins, John, 42, 43
- Hill, Polly, 197, 335
- Hindes, Barry, 11, 295, 349
- Hinebahlafe Konati, 209
- Hirst, Paul Q., 11, 295, 349
- Hodh, 211
- Holden, J., 195
- Holy Ghost Fathers, 252, 254
See also missionaries
- holy wars, 15, 59, 69, 185
See also jihad
- horses, 29, 36, 55, 68, 79, 103, 106, 107, 114, 119, 121, 194, 212, 306, 315
- Hueda, 79, 95, 97
- Ibadan, 142, 158, 172–175, 305, 310, 315, 345, 355, 357, 362
- Ibibio, 58, 82, 83, 100, 143, 177
- Ibn Battuta, 27, 299
- Ibn Fartua, 31
- Ibn Idris, Uthman, 30
- Ibo, 226, 310, 314, 318, 323, 331, 332, 346
- Ibrahim, 138, 190, 348, 353, 362
- Idah, 96, 100, 101, 173, 180
- Idris Aloma, 31
- Ife, 174
- Ifogha, 211
See Tuareg tribes
- Igala, 121, 143
- Igbirra, 201
- Igbo, 15, 58, 82, 83, 85, 100, 121, 143, 158, 177–181, 183, 184, 219, 252, 296, 305, 310, 314, 318, 323, 324, 327, 331, 332, 346, 355
- Igbo-Ukwu, 15
- Ijaw, 82, 177, 181
- Ijaye, 174
- Ijebu, 172, 175, 330
- Ikelionwu (Ndieni cluster), 121
- Ikelionwu, 121
Ndieni cluster, 121
- illegal enslavement, 42, 85, 86, 121
enslavement, 3, 10, 16, 22, 59, 75, 78, 84, 85, 121, 125, 143, 144, 158, 159, 234, 278
- Imbangala warriors, 93
- Imerina, 77, 94, 237, 286, 287, 289, 290
- Imezureg, 212

- Imoru, Imam, 198, 336
 Imperial British East Africa Company, 256, 290
 India, 1, 22, 34, 68, 89, 104, 105, 129, 130, 150–152, 220–222, 224, 255, 263, 275, 288, 289, 307, 315, 321
 Indian Ocean, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, 25, 40, 45, 46, 60, 61, 63, 68, 76, 77, 90, 102, 131, 137, 138, 147, 151, 220, 229, 273, 279, 282, 283, 288, 298, 322, 325, 355, 356
 See slaves
 indigo, 32, 61, 197, 206, 208, 214, 220
 Indonesia, 105, 129
 Inhambane, 94, 227
 iron, 12, 51, 91, 103–105, 116, 228, 294, 295, 351, 360
 Isaacman, A., 76, 308, 321, 325, 326, 340, 344, 358, 363
 Isichei, Elizabeth, 144, 296, 305, 310, 314, 318, 323, 331, 346
 Islam, 2, 3, 15–18, 21, 24, 25, 28–33, 35, 37, 41, 43, 45, 59, 67, 70, 73, 92, 111, 119, 120, 148, 155, 176, 198, 218, 219, 263, 281, 296–298, 316, 334, 358, 359
 See also, traders, Muslim
 Isna, 148
 Item, 58, 83, 88, 95, 102, 106, 178, 207, 273, 309
 ivory, 34, 36, 51, 56, 59, 76, 81, 91, 102–104, 126, 136, 138, 145, 146, 151–153, 160, 164, 185, 194, 202, 205, 215, 225–229, 233, 234, 275, 308, 312, 325, 329, 332–334, 337, 339, 349, 355, 361
 Ivory Coast, 51, 56, 59, 91, 103, 104, 160, 164, 194, 329, 332–334, 337, 349
 Ivuna, 225
 Iwllammedan, 211
 See Tuareg tribes
 Ja'aliyin, 204
 Jabal Marra mountains, 113, 202
 Jabarti, 90, 92
 Jaga warriors, 41
 Jahanke, 90
 Jaja, 180, 181, 252
 Jakin, 55, 79, 80, 97
 Jamaica, 47, 114, 306, 317
 See also West Indies
 James Fort, 128
 Jemma, 149, 203
 Jega, 173, 197
 Jellaba, 90, 92, 158, 186, 204
 Jema'are, 156
 Jenne, 26, 33, 96, 173, 192, 193, 195, 334
 Jesuits, 129
 See missionaries
 Jewelry, 102, 236
 Jews, 15, 31, 90
 jihad, 67, 72, 114, 155–158, 188, 189, 191, 193, 195, 196, 198–202, 205, 218, 293, 307, 308, 310, 311, 317, 325, 326, 351
 See holy war, 15, 28, 67, 70, 72, 73, 195
 Jilore, 255
 Jimma, 203, 205
 Jobson, Richard, 112, 316
 Jodham, 30
 Johnson, Samuel, 174, 330
 Jones, William Henry, 256
 Jukun, 71, 96, 113, 199
 Kabadugu, 194, 197
 Kabuku ka Ndonga, 75
 Kade, 166, 187
 Kaedi, 187
 Kafaba, 118
 Kaffa, 203, 205
 Kagboro valley, 164
 Kajoor, 73, 190, 357
 Kalabari, 96, 178, 180
 Kalahari Desert, 239
 Kalaka, 149
 Kalandula, 75
 Kalanyi valley, 127
 Kamalu, 144
 Kamberri, 201
 Kanawa, 91
 Kanem, 26, 28, 30, 31
 Kangaba, 91
 Kankan, 96, 173, 193, 194, 264
 Kano, 26, 31, 71, 72, 91, 96, 113, 156, 173, 186, 195–199, 208, 212, 213, 215, 265, 266, 316, 318, 335, 337, 362
 See Hausa states
 Kasai valley, 39, 76, 94
 Kasanje, 39, 76, 94
 Kasanje, 53, 65, 75, 76, 93–95, 101, 103, 122, 124, 125, 145
 Mbundu states, 53
 Kasongo, 94, 225, 226, 340
 Katagum, 156
 Katanga, 225, 324
 Katsina, 26, 31, 71, 72, 91, 96, 156, 173, 195, 197–199, 212, 213, 317
 See Hausa states
 Katsinawa, 91

- Kaura Namoda, 173, 197
 Kaushe, 199
 Kavar oases, 212
 Kaymor, 73, 189
 Kayor, 260
 Kazaure, 213
 Kazembe, 53, 76, 94, 95, 145, 237, 308, 340
 Kebbi, 195, 197
 Keffi, 173
 Kel Air, 211
 Kel Fadey 211
 Kel Tamat, 111
 Kel Adragh, 211
 Kel Ajjer, 211
 Kel Attaram, 211
 Kel Dinnik, 211
 Kel Ewey, 211, 212
 Kel Ferwan, 211
 Kel Tademekket, 211
 Kenya, 61, 138, 151, 294, 305, 339, 347, 350, 353, 356, 360
 Ketu, 174
 Khartoum, 149, 203, 311, 348, 353
 Khoikhoi, 130, 131, 232, 233, 321
 Kiba, 192
 Kibanga, 257
 Kidnapping, 3, 10, 16, 22, 59, 75, 78, 84, 85, 121, 125, 143, 144, 158, 159, 234, 278
 See illegal enslavement
 Kilwa, 61, 76, 77, 92, 94, 153, 226
 Kimberley, 242, 277
 kinship, 2, 3, 5, 10, 12–18, 20, 21, 41, 44, 53, 75, 82, 108–111, 118, 119, 125, 127, 133, 134, 162, 169, 171, 172, 176, 179, 181, 184, 218, 222, 234–236, 238–242, 268, 269, 271, 273, 296
 See production
 Kirando, 94, 225
 Kirngabu, 200
 Kisama, 103
 Kissicountry, 193
 Kita, 211, 261, 348
 Kitangonya, 226, 227
 Kitchener, Lord H., 262
 Klein, Martin, 187, 214, 217, 265, 295, 296, 297, 299, 307, 322, 327, 332, 333, 334, 338, 347, 348, 350, 351, 355, 358, 360, 361
 Koi, David, p.225
 kola nuts, 11, 37, 91, 92, 102–104, 161, 165, 167–169, 191, 215
 Kolen, 187
 Kololo, 229
 Koncha, 157, 173
 Kong, 57, 72, 96, 156, 173, 194, 195, 328
 Kongo, 38–42, 47, 49, 53, 54, 56, 59, 67, 73–75, 85, 93–95, 122–124, 129, 239, 240, 301, 302, 308, 312, 318, 319, 344, 362
 Konjora, 224
 Konkol, 200
 Konyan, 193, 194
 Kopytoff, Igor, 360
 Kordofan, 113, 149, 202–204, 215, 325
 Kormantin, 97
 Koro, 201
 Koury, 265
 Koutiala, 187, 265
 Krobo, 251
 Kru, 164, 247, 328, 356
 Kuba, 94, 145, 242, 243, 344, 362
 Kufra oasis, 26, 90, 261
 Kulubali, Kalajan, 72
 Kulubali, 72
 Kalajan, 72
 Kulubali, Mamari, 72, 73
 Kumasi, 96, 117, 147, 164, 167–169, 173, 218, 248
 Kumi Swamp, 98
 Kurumi, 174
 Kurussa, 187
 Kutumbi, 113
 Kwango valley, 39, 76, 94, 103
 Kwanza valley, 103
 Kwawu, 156
 Kwenun, 172
 Labe, 173, 191, 333
 Lafia, 173
 Lagos, 19, 55, 80, 96, 98, 143, 161, 172, 173, 176, 249, 250, 288, 323, 330, 347, 360
 Lake Boya, 127
 Lake Chad, 25, 27, 31, 67, 69, 70, 102, 113, 115, 195, 196, 202
 Lake Mai Ndombe, 236
 Lake Malawi, 76, 77, 146, 152–154, 223, 226, 228, 229, 233, 256, 262
 Lake Tanganyika, 153, 225, 226, 233, 254, 257
 Lake Victoria, 153
 Lamu, 92, 94, 224, 255
 Langui, 200
 Lavigerie, Cardinal, 254, 257, 277, 290, 321, 322, 326, 340, 344, 347, 353, 361
 leather, 165, 196, 208, 210
 LeVeen, E.P., 52, 137, 303, 310, 322, 359

- Liberia, 51, 59, 91, 103, 104, 160, 163, 164,
 247, 248, 286, 288, 317, 327, 328, 345
 libertos, 19, 146, 147, 221, 227, 288, 324
 Libya, 25
 Lindi, 226
 lineage, 12–14, 20, 75, 110, 118, 125, 127,
 128, 162, 167, 168, 170, 177–179, 183,
 222, 234, 238–241, 254, 258, 259, 271,
 272, 296, 308, 319
 See also kinship
 lineagemode of production, 110, 118,
 125–128, 222, 238–243
 See under production
 Liptako, 173, 186, 197
 Lisala, 236
 livestock, 35, 37, 89, 102, 115, 165, 175, 185,
 191, 208–210, 212, 213, 215, 217, 232,
 233, 236, 242, 272
 Livingstone, David, 229, 254
 Loango, 19, 52, 53, 93, 94, 101, 106, 122,
 126, 145, 234, 303, 312, 315, 319,
 342, 360
 Lobi, 26, 33, 187
 Lobo, Araujo, 228, 229
 Logone valley, 70
 Lokolela, 236
 Lomami valley, 76
 Lonsdale, R. LaT., quoted, 167
 Lopes de Lima, J.J., quoted, 230
 Lopez, Duarte, 302
 Louga, 187
 Lourenco Marques, 94, 286
 Lozi state, 236
 Lualaba valley, 76, 225, 226
 Luanda, 18, 19, 39, 40, 46, 48, 53, 54, 56, 64,
 74, 76, 92–95, 101, 122, 124–127, 129,
 131, 147, 219, 221, 230, 298, 312, 319,
 320, 322, 340, 341, 356
 Luapula valley, 76
 Luba, 76, 94, 95, 127, 145, 319
 Lugard, Sir Frederick, 282, 349
 Luiza valley, 127
 Lukala, 129
 Lukenye region, 236
 Lulua valley, 127
 Lunda, 53, 76, 84, 94, 95, 101, 127, 145, 158,
 237, 308, 312, 319, 324, 343

 Maasi, 187
 Ma Ba, 188
 McCoskry, William, quoted, 250
 MacDonald, Rev. Duff, quoted, 257, 347
 Macklin, Rev., quoted, 256, 257

 Maclean, George, 248
 Madagali, 157
 Madagascar, 34, 61, 77, 94, 129, 130, 147,
 151, 220, 233, 237, 268, 270, 286, 290,
 298, 300, 309, 322, 325, 339, 343, 350,
 353, 356, 359
 Madeira Islands, 36, 38
 Magaria, 206
 Mahdi, Mulay al-, 211
 Mahdist state, 155, 205, 261, 262, 325, 333,
 337, 348, 352, 353
 Mai Ali, 113
 Makogeni, 255
 Makonde, 77
 Maldiv Islands, 105
 Malebo Pool (Stanley Pool), 39, 40, 53, 73, 92,
 93, 94, 122, 145, 235
 Malemba, 93
 male slaves, 6, 14, 31, 55, 63, 118, 125, 129,
 133, 139, 157, 174, 196, 207, 214, 229,
 235, 271, 303
 Mali, 26, 29–31, 259, 299, 333, 334
 Malindi, 34, 94, 152, 153, 224, 225, 255, 269
 Malinke, 189, 207, 332–334, 337, 349
 Mambroi, 223
 Mamprussi, 156, 157, 173
 Mandara, 70
 Manganja, 229
 Manning, P., 52, 55, 64, 65, 104, 109, 294,
 297, 298, 303, 304, 306, 309, 312, 313,
 315, 316, 322, 323, 330, 360
 manufacturing, 17, 188
 Maradi, 156, 173
 Maraka, 90, 191, 208, 211, 214, 333
 Marrakesh, 31
 Margi, 218, 339
 marriage, 6, 13, 14, 16, 18, 82, 110, 126, 162,
 171, 176, 181, 183, 214, 234, 238–241,
 270, 273, 296, 319
 See also concubines; harems; wives
 Marshall, James, quoted, 251, 346, 347
 Martinez, Domingo, 172, 330
 Martinique, 47
 See also West Indies
 Marua, 173
 Marxist theory, 245, 279, 295, 328, 349, 350
 Masaba, 200
 Masanze, 257
 Mascarene Islands, 60, 61, 138, 152
 Masina, 114, 155, 192, 193, 317, 334
 Massangano, 93
 Massawa, 25, 26, 149, 203, 289
 Mataka, 229

- Matakania, 228
 Mataka Nyambi I, 229
 Matamba, 53, 65, 75, 93–95, 122, 124, 125
 See also Mbundu states
 matrilineal societies, 118, 127, 239
 Mauritius, 220, 222, 287, 325, 339, 362
 See also Mascarene Islands
 Maxanbinnu, 211
 Mayotte Island, 220, 325, 339
 See also Comoro Islands
 Mazrui family, 224
 Mbailundo, 93
 Mbanza Sonyo, 41, 74, 93, 122, 123
 Mbundu states, 53
 Medicon, 86
 Medicine, 158, 187
 Mediterranean region, 15–17, 22, 30, 32, 36, 37, 64, 138, 358
 Meillassoux, C., 270, 294–296, 299, 306, 311, 312, 316, 317, 328–330, 332–335, 338, 343, 349–351, 360
 Mellacouri valley, 164
 Mendes Correa, A. A., 234, 324
 merchants, 10, 16, 20–22, 25, 28, 30, 32, 34–38, 41, 42, 44, 51, 54, 56–59, 62, 69, 75, 76, 78, 82–93, 95, 97–108, 110–112, 114, 116–121, 126, 129, 135, 144, 145, 147, 149, 152, 153, 157, 158, 163–166, 168–172, 174, 177–179, 182, 188, 191–193, 195, 196, 199–205, 207, 210, 211, 213–215, 217, 222, 225, 226, 229, 233, 235, 239, 246–250, 253, 255, 271, 273–275, 280, 307, 314, 326, 334, 337, 348, 351, 361
 Adarawa, 214, 215
 Agalawa, 213–215
 Alladian, 171, 317, 328, 329
 Azanaghi, 36
 Dyula, 90, 311, 326, 334
 Juula, 90, 91, 156, 166, 191, 193, 194, 211, 311
 Higglers, 114
 Susu, 164
 Tokarawa, 214, 215
 See also traders
 Merikano, 255
 Merina, 222, 233, 343, 359
 Methodists, 252
 Middle East, 11, 24, 30, 36, 68, 148, 221, 282
 Miers, S., 294, 296, 299, 307, 308, 317–319, 321, 325–328, 331, 332, 335, 339, 340, 344, 345, 347, 348, 353, 356, 358, 360
 migrant labor, 233, 245, 258, 262, 276–278, 329, 349, 352
 military, 5, 8, 15–18, 20, 28–32, 34, 35, 41, 56, 59, 63, 66, 68–70, 72, 75, 77–79, 82, 88, 89, 106, 107, 109, 110, 113, 114, 119, 124, 125, 132, 134, 136, 142, 149, 153, 155, 162, 175, 176, 179–181, 191, 193, 198, 203, 205, 206, 219, 222, 237, 238, 240, 241, 243, 246, 249, 250, 253, 257, 259–261, 264, 273, 275, 278, 279, 310, 348, 353
 slaves in, 18, 273
 Miller, Joseph C., 48, 294, 296, 298, 301, 303, 305, 308, 311–313, 319, 320, 324, 341–343, 356, 360
 mining, 9–11, 33, 42, 117, 128, 132, 133, 161, 164, 167, 169, 237, 245, 267, 268, 272
 copper, 11, 92, 95, 102–105, 126, 153, 225
 gold, 8, 11, 12, 21, 26, 27, 32–34, 36–38, 42, 46, 48–50, 56–59, 62–64, 67, 71, 76, 78–81, 84, 91, 95–98, 102–105, 112, 115–119, 122, 128, 132, 134, 136–138, 140, 146, 148, 160, 161, 163–165, 167–169, 191, 193, 195, 212, 228, 248–253, 267, 268, 276, 277, 289, 293–295, 297, 298, 300, 301, 304, 309, 310, 312–315, 317, 320, 322, 328, 329, 345, 346, 351, 352, 355–358, 360
 salt, 12, 17, 18, 21, 32–34, 37, 89, 95, 100, 102, 103, 115–117, 121, 125, 138, 153, 164, 165, 181, 189, 191, 196, 208–213, 215, 216, 225, 300, 307, 314, 325, 338, 359
 slaves, 1–25, 27–38, 40–93, 95, 97–140, 142–279, 281–283, 285–290, 293, 294, 296–300, 302–316, 318, 320–322, 324–327, 329–332, 334, 337, 339, 341–343, 345–351, 353, 355–358, 360–363
 missionaries, 71, 123, 129, 160, 240, 246, 247, 249, 251–257, 259, 277
 See also Christianity
 Mist, Commissary General J.A. de, quoted, 131, 132, 321
 Moçamedes, 94, 230, 231
 Moeko valley, 236
 Mogadishu, 92
 Moko Tala, 209
 Mombasa, 34, 92, 94, 152, 153, 224, 225, 254–256, 287, 290
 monetary system, 105
 See also prices
 monopolies, 89, 95, 102
 Monrovia, 49, 163, 173, 247, 248

- Moore, Francis, quoted, 86, 111, 311, 316
 Morocco, 25, 31, 32, 67, 90, 289, 305, 357
 mortality rate, 147, 324
See also death
 Morton, R.F., 269, 294, 339, 347, 350,
 357, 360
 Moshi valley, 79
 Mossefa, 33
 Mossi states, 90, 156, 157, 217
 Mozambique, 19, 61, 76, 94, 137, 151, 224,
 226, 227, 289, 298, 308, 321, 322, 324,
 325, 340, 344, 358
 Mpinda, 38–41, 94, 123, 124
 Msiri, 153
 Mswata, 235
 Mtwapa, 223
 Muanamutapa, 67
 Muhammad (Prophet), 90
 Muhammad Ahmad (the Mahdi), 149,
 202, 205
 Muhammad Ali of Egypt, 148–149
 Muhammad Ali of Wadai, 202
 Muhammad Bello, 198, 200
 Muhammad Kaba, 114, 317
 Muhammad, Lawal, 200
 Murja, 211
 Murzuk oasis, 25–27, 90

 Nabahani family, 255
 Namtari, 200
 Nara, 211
 Nasarawa, 199
 Natal, 233, 242
 Ndikelionwu, 82
 Ndizuogu, 82, 121
 Ndoki, 178
 Ndongo, 38–40, 94, 127
 Nema, 173, 211
 Netherlands, 129
See also traders, Dutch
 New Calabar, 58
See Elem Kalabari
 Ngaundere, 157, 173, 196
 Ngiri valley, 236
 Ngobila, Chief, 235
 Ngobila, 235
 Ngongo Mbata, 93
 Nguni, 228, 233, 242
 Nguru, 144
 NgwaIgbo, 177–178, 226
 Niger delta, 48, 58, 67, 78, 81, 82, 99, 104,
 105, 115, 121, 143, 144, 161, 177, 178,
 180, 181, 192, 252, 253, 273, 305, 310,
 313, 318, 355, 357
 Nigeria, 79, 259, 264, 265, 282, 283, 290,
 293, 294, 298, 303, 305, 308, 310, 312,
 314, 315, 317, 318, 322, 323, 326,
 330–332, 339, 344–348, 353,
 357–361
 Niger valley, 11, 25, 32, 33, 69, 188, 191–193,
 195, 197, 200, 277, 307, 326, 333, 334,
 348, 351, 361
 Nike, 143, 179
 Nile valley, 25, 28, 34, 67, 69, 70, 89, 92, 137,
 138, 148, 149, 154, 158, 202, 259, 261,
 264, 265, 357
 Nilotic Sudan, 148–150, 186, 188, 202, 205,
 289, 336, 348, 352, 353
See also Sudan
 Ningi, 156
 Nioro, 211
 Nkoranza, 118
 nomads, 29, 32, 71, 91, 115, 199, 204, 207,
 208, 210–213
 Nossi Be Island, 147, 220
 Nri, 144
 Ntamo, 235
 Nuba mountains, 149
 Nubia, 70
 Nupe, 79, 80, 96, 99, 104, 119, 173, 186, 197,
 199–201, 265, 313, 326
 Nwagalasi Oguikpe, 178
 Nwannenta, Egege, 178
 Nyamwezi, 92, 152, 153, 225, 233, 257, 312,
 326, 340
 Nyanaoase, 80, 97, 98, 117
 Nzinga, Queen, 101

 Obegu, 178
 Odienne, 173, 194, 197, 349
 Offra, 19, 55, 79, 97
 Ogbomoso, 174
 Ogun valley, 79
 Ohafia, 143
 Ohambebe, 177, 178
 oil, 136, 144, 155, 158, 161, 163, 165, 171,
 172, 174, 177–180, 182, 200, 224, 227,
 236, 253, 318, 323, 330, 331, 358, 360
 Olelewa, 212
 Olumene, 180
 Oluyole, 175
 Oman, 90, 152, 222, 287, 288
 Omani, 92, 152, 221, 222, 287
 Ondo, 175

- Onitsha, 178
 Opara valley, 79
 Opobo, 177, 178, 180, 181, 252
 oracles, 82, 84, 95, 143, 144, 310, 323
 Orange Free State, 233
 Ossomari, 178
 ostrich feathers, 136, 185, 210, 212, 215, 275
 osu, 121, 183, 184, 332
 See also religion
 Otamiri valley, 144
 Ottoman Empire, 67, 70, 90, 136, 148, 288, 290
 Ouidah (Whydah), 18, 19, 54–56, 79–81, 91, 95–99, 172–174, 359
 Ovimbundu plateau, 93
 Owu, 142
 Oyo, 55–57, 60, 67, 68, 77–81, 84, 91, 92, 95–98, 101, 104, 119, 120, 122, 142, 174, 199–201, 303, 304, 309, 312, 313, 315, 318, 359
 Ozuzu, 144

 Palm oil, 136, 144, 155, 158, 161, 163, 165, 171, 172, 174, 177, 179, 180, 182, 236, 253, 323, 330, 331, 358, 360
 See also oil
 Pangani valley, 226
 Park, Mungo, 91, 112, 311, 316
 Pate, 92, 94, 224, 255
 patrilineal societies, 118, 162, 170
 pawnship, 5, 10, 13, 78, 110, 118, 124, 234, 241, 253, 296, 343, 347, 352, 355, 359
 peanuts, 136, 165, 185, 189, 190, 193, 200, 208, 211, 333
 peasants, 10, 17, 29, 34, 35, 74, 123, 132, 166, 177, 189, 190, 192, 196, 198, 204, 218, 227, 237, 240, 268, 269, 324, 333, 341, 347
 Pemba Island, 222
 Penel, J., quoted, 261
 perfume, 71, 102
 Persian Gulf, 15, 22, 224, 288
 Pessoa de Almeida Catellobranco, Dona Ines, 133
 Pette, 200
 Pine, Sir Benjamin, 249, 345
 plantations, 8, 32–34, 40–42, 47, 60, 68, 70, 89, 111, 114, 116–118, 120, 127–131, 152, 153, 161–169, 172, 174–177, 179, 182, 183, 188, 190–200, 204, 206–209, 213, 215, 217, 219, 222–227, 229, 230, 235, 238, 249, 255, 257, 258, 260, 264, 268, 271, 274, 299, 300, 302, 317, 333–337
 See also agriculture
 polygamy, 125, 241
 Popoco, 190
 porters (slaves), 10, 38, 42, 83, 112, 116, 118, 126, 129, 161, 167, 170, 171, 175, 177, 223, 225, 229, 245, 251, 254, 265, 273
 Porto Novo, 55, 56, 80, 96–98, 143, 172, 288
 Portugal, 37, 38, 40, 42, 286, 287, 288, 289
 See also trader, Portuguese
 Prazos, 132, 133, 146, 227, 228, 308, 321, 325, 340, 358
 prices, 16, 21, 51, 52, 62, 63, 88, 90, 93, 98, 102, 107, 137–140, 169, 228, 231, 322
 Príncipe Island, 38, 40, 147, 220, 221, 230, 231, 238, 274
 prisoners of war, 15, 30, 85, 121, 156, 174
 production, 5, 8–12, 14, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 28, 31–33, 35, 36, 38, 58, 63, 68, 102, 106, 108–112, 114, 115, 117, 121–125, 127, 129, 132–134, 147, 149, 152, 154, 155, 158–161, 163, 164, 166, 169, 171, 174, 175, 177–179, 183–185, 188–190, 193–197, 202, 204–207, 209–211, 214, 217, 219, 221–224, 226–230, 232, 233, 235, 236, 238, 240, 242–245, 248, 254, 258, 267–278, 281, 295, 296, 309, 314, 327, 329–331, 334, 336, 338, 342, 343, 349–351, 359, 362
 lineage mode, 296
 slave mode, 10, 11, 24, 115, 122, 124, 154, 159, 161, 184, 185, 233, 242, 267–275, 278, 330, 350, 351
 Protestant Universities Mission, 256
 See also missionaries

 Quelimane, 76, 94, 146, 226, 227, 324, 340

 Raba, 200
 Rabai, 254–256
 Rabeh Fadlallah, 186, 205
 Radama, King (Imerina), 237
 Rai-Buba, 157
 raids (slave), 35, 69–71, 75, 91, 110, 111, 127, 150, 218, 229, 268
 Red Sea, slaves to, 11, 12, 16, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27–29, 34, 40, 45, 46, 60, 61, 63, 64, 68, 71, 92, 102, 103, 137, 138, 148–151, 154, 185, 203, 219, 261, 273, 288, 289, 305, 307, 322

- religion, 3, 15, 90, 119, 155, 156, 230,
311, 355
use of slaves in, 8, 11, 17, 20, 23, 24, 33,
114, 117, 136, 161–163, 179, 184, 185,
188, 197, 206, 219, 220, 243, 254, 260,
271–275, 281
See also Christianity, Islam, Jews,
missionaries, sacrifices
- Reunion Island, 147, 220, 222
See also Mascarene Islands
- Rhodesia, 347
- Riba-Riba, 225
- Ribe, 254, 255
- rice, 8, 33, 102, 114, 129, 161, 164, 190, 193,
224, 226, 237, 358
- Ril, 113
- Rizeiqat nomads, 204
- Rodney, W., 293, 297, 301–303, 305, 307,
314, 315, 317, 320, 328, 351, 361
- Romer, L.F., quoted, 118, 318
- Royal African Company, 101, 116, 164, 298,
304–306, 320, 359
- rubber, 136, 165, 226, 233, 234, 268, 329
- Rumonge, 257
- Russia, 15, 286, 287, 290
- Saalum, 73, 189, 260
- Sabe, 79
- Sacrifices, 4, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 83, 116, 118,
121, 124, 126, 181, 182, 183, 235, 237,
242–243, 249, 252–253, 258, 273
- Sahara desert, slaves to, 3, 11, 12, 15, 16,
17, 20, 22, 24, 25–36, 40, 46, 60–61,
63, 68, 72, 73, 102, 103, 106–107, 111,
113, 137–138, 148–150, 158, 185, 191,
202–205, 208–209, 211–215, 261–262,
273, 283
- Sa'id, Sultan Sayyid, 152, 222
- Saint Domingue, 285
See also West Indies
- St Kitts, 47
See also West Indies
- Saint Louis, 128, 189, 259
- Saint Louis-Dakar railway, 189–190
- Sainte-Marie Island, 220
- Sakalava, 77
- Salaga, 156, 165, 166, 169, 173, 250, 318
- Salt, 12, 17, 18, 21, 32–34, 37, 89, 95, 100,
102, 103, 115–117, 121, 125, 138, 153,
164, 165, 181, 189, 191, 196, 208–213,
215, 216, 225, 300, 307, 314, 325,
338, 359
See also mining
- Salt, H., quoted, 216, 338
- Samori, 155, 158, 188, 189, 192, 194, 197,
259, 264, 265, 311, 326, 334
- San, 232
- Sanamba, 211
- Sancul, 226, 227
- Sansanne Mango, 218
- São Jorge da Mina, 38
See also Elmina
- São Salvador, 38–41, 93, 94, 123
- São Tomé Island, 38–42, 94, 147, 220–221,
230–231, 238, 301
- Satadugu, 187
- savanna region, 67
- Schulz, A., 239, 344
- Secret societies, 121, 158
- Segala-Sokolo, 211
- Segu, 72, 73, 91, 96, 155, 173, 187, 188,
191–194, 259, 264, 334
- Segu Bambara, 191, 192, 334
- Segu Tukolor, 155, 191–194, 259, 264
- Senegal valley, 190
- Senegambia, 36–38, 47, 49, 59, 60, 68, 69, 72,
73, 78, 86, 90, 91, 102–104, 107, 111,
112, 140, 155, 160, 185, 188–190, 197,
200, 259, 276, 299, 301, 305, 307, 310,
311, 314–316, 319, 320, 327, 333, 337,
348, 349, 355, 356, 360
- Sennar, 26, 28–30, 67, 70, 89, 90, 92, 113,
115, 148, 149, 186, 202, 203, 307
- Senufo, 57, 170
- serfdom, 5, 326, 335, 342
- sesame seeds, 226
- Sewji, Jairam, 223
- sex ratios, 63, 64, 306
- Seychelle Islands, 220, 222
- Shaiqiya region, 202
- Shona plateau, 11
- Shari valley, 70
- Shea butter, 200
- Shendi, 149, 203
- Sherbro, 116, 163, 317, 327
- Shilluk, 149
- Shire valley, 146, 229
- Shoba, 113
- shurfa, 90
- Sibi family, 211
- Sidama, 150
- Sierra Leone, 19, 42, 43, 59, 91, 103, 104,
108, 115, 116, 160, 161, 163, 164, 172,
176, 219, 246–249, 253, 260, 285, 286,
290, 291, 302, 317, 320, 324, 327, 328,
345, 346, 349, 357, 361

- Siguiri, 187
 Sikasso, 173, 194, 265
 silver, 8, 103, 104, 294
 Sine, 260
 Sinsani, 26, 96, 155, 173, 191, 192, 194, 208, 211, 334
 Slave Coast, 47, 52, 54, 56, 57, 79–81, 84, 95, 97, 102, 104, 106, 309, 359
 slave occupations, 14, 35, 130, 213–214
 See agriculture
 Smith, M.G., 199, 335, 336
 Snelgrave, William, quoted, 120, 318
 social status, 15, 110, 320, 356
 Société des Missions Africaines, 252
 Sokolo, 173, 187, 192
 Sokoto, 138, 142, 150, 155–158, 173, 186, 195–199, 202, 206, 208, 212, 214, 215, 218, 259, 262, 263, 265, 282, 287, 296, 317, 322, 326, 333–337, 349, 359, 362
 soldiers, 17, 24, 30–32, 35, 41, 60, 70, 73, 124, 128, 132, 146, 148, 162, 172, 174–176, 203, 204, 222, 227, 241, 250, 261, 273, 357
 See also military
 Somali, 92, 149, 205, 255, 347
 Songhay, 26–33, 66, 67, 72, 91, 157, 296, 299, 300
 Soninke, 90, 211, 217
 Sonyo, 41, 74, 93, 122–124
 Southern Baptists, 252
 Spain, 136, 286, 290
 spices, 102, 129, 138, 151, 220, 339, 361
 Stanley, Henry M., 254
 Stanley Pool, 40, 53, 73, 92, 93, 122, 145, 235
 See also Malebo Pool
 Suakin, 25, 26, 203
 Sudan, 25, 33, 34, 69–71, 73, 90, 112, 114, 115, 132, 138, 148–150, 155, 157, 158, 186–188, 195–197, 202, 203, 205, 211, 212, 214, 217, 259, 260, 262–265, 270, 276, 289, 294, 296, 299, 307, 311, 313, 316, 324, 325, 327, 332–339, 347–350, 352, 353, 355, 359, 361
 Suez Canal, 261
 sugar, 8, 36, 42, 47, 76, 302
 Sumpi, 187
 Sutukho, 112
 Swahili, 30, 46, 64, 90, 92, 138, 151–153, 158, 221, 222, 225–227, 229, 233, 254–257, 294, 340, 358
 Syria, 30, 149
 Taban Sani, 199
 Tabora, 94, 140, 225
 Tajura, 25, 26, 149, 203
 Takaungu, 94, 224, 225, 255
 Takyiman, 156
 Talata Mafara, 197
 Tananarive, 94, 237
 Tana valley, 255
 Tanzania, 152–154, 293, 297, 340
 Tasso, 116
 Tawana, 239
 taxation, 34, 53, 70, 124, 192, 258, 268, 278
 See also tribute
 Teghaza, 26, 33
 Teguida n'tesemt, 34
 Tenkodogo, 187
 Teodros, Emperor, 150
 Terray, E., 11, 267, 272
 Tessawa, 212, 213
 textiles, 12, 36, 37, 79, 89, 95, 102–106, 108, 129, 165, 185, 191, 193, 196, 208, 210, 211, 215, 225, 337
 Thornton, John, 362
 Tiassale, 171
 Tibati, 157, 173
 Tichit, 173, 211
 Tienbugu, 211
 Tillemann, E., quoted, 117
 Timbi, 187
 Timbo, 96, 114, 190
 Timbuktu, 25, 26, 31, 37, 70, 72, 86, 96, 150, 173, 192, 193, 195, 211, 317
 tin, 102
 Tingeregif, 211
 See also Tuareg tribes
 Tio, 41, 93, 235, 342, 362
 Tippu Tip, 153, 225, 226
 Tivouane, 187
 tobacco, 8, 102, 106, 197, 206, 208
 Tonga, 229
 Toron, 193
 Toure, Vakaba, 194
 traders, 32, 54, 68, 74, 79–81, 119, 133, 142, 165, 210, 246, 269, 270, 273, 286, 287
 American, 8, 48, 61, 121, 122, 137, 152, 219, 221, 230, 247, 248, 254, 276, 286, 290, 299, 304, 308, 309, 312, 317, 318, 329, 333, 358
 Bobangi, 145, 233, 235, 236, 269, 342
 British, 48, 51, 56, 58, 68, 78, 104, 106, 121, 126, 135, 138–140, 143–150, 154, 160, 161, 163, 167, 189, 190, 195, 205, 206, 220, 221, 226, 227, 231–233,

- traders (*cont.*)
 245–253, 256, 258–266, 282, 285–290,
 303, 306, 310, 321, 322, 324, 328, 329,
 336, 339, 342, 344, 345, 348, 349, 352,
 353, 355, 359, 361
 Danish, 46, 48, 64, 138, 293, 297, 313,
 322, 358
 Dutch, 48, 53, 60, 62, 68, 75, 93, 97,
 101, 105, 118, 128–132, 146–148,
 156, 220, 231, 248, 298, 304, 306,
 321, 357, 362
 English, 42, 48, 53, 93, 97, 101, 105, 112,
 116, 128, 164, 182, 227, 257, 264,
 315, 359
See British; French; Maltese; Muslim;
 Portuguese; private; Ragusian; Venetian;
See also merchants; trans-Atlantic trade;
 export of slaves
 trans-Atlantic trade, 18, 40, 42, 45, 46, 52, 53,
 59, 63, 82, 109, 125, 136, 137, 140, 174,
 230, 270, 272, 273
 Transvaal, 94, 233, 342
 tribute, 10, 34, 35, 38, 53, 56, 59, 72, 75, 79,
 80, 82, 89, 95, 97, 101, 115, 117, 125,
 127, 132, 133, 146, 156, 157, 168, 169,
 178, 197, 200, 213, 218, 236, 237, 268,
 269, 273, 315
See also taxation
 Tripoli, 90, 215, 310
 Tuareg tribes, 211–213
 Tuat oasis, 89
 Tuba, 173, 187, 192, 264
 Tunis, 26, 90
 Turkey, 68
 Tuwat, 25, 26
 tyeddo, 73, 189, 260
See military

 Ubangi valley, 243
 Uburu, 100, 121, 181
 Ujiji, 94, 140, 225, 226, 257
 ‘Umar, al-Hajj, 155, 188, 189, 191,
 192, 194
 UMCA (Protestant Universities Mission of
 Central Africa), 256
 United Methodist Free Churches, 254
 United States, 135, 136, 163, 246, 247, 279,
 286, 287, 289, 290
See also traders, American, Americas
 Upemba Depression, 127
 Usuman dan Fodio, 195, 198
 Uvinza, 94, 225
 Uzuakoli, 178

 Vai, 116, 164, 317, 328
 Vanga, 94, 224, 225
 Vili, 53, 93, 95, 126, 127, 235
 Villages de liberte, 260–261
See also fugitive slaves
 Volta valley, 11, 26, 70, 79, 81, 97, 103, 157,
 160, 163, 165, 169, 173, 196, 217, 251

 Wa, 157, 173, 195
 Wadai, 70, 92, 150, 202, 203, 205, 215, 336
 Waddell, Hope, quoted, 182
 Walata, 26, 211
 Walo, 188, 260, 289
 Walz, T., 305, 324, 362
 Wangara, 91
 Wangarawa, 91
 Wangata, 236
 Wankyi, 156
 wars, 3, 15, 28–30, 43, 49, 53, 55–57, 59, 62,
 64, 68–72, 75–78, 81, 83, 84, 88, 89, 98,
 101, 113, 123, 124, 142, 143, 149, 152,
 155, 158, 174, 175, 185, 190, 192, 194,
 200, 205, 218, 220, 233, 239, 269, 273,
 282, 283, 301, 302, 308, 312, 318, 319
 Wase, 173, 199, 265
 Wasini, 224
 Wasulu, 173, 193, 194
 Watamu region, 224
 Weeks, J.H., 239–240
 Weme, 79, 98
 Wesleyan Missionary Society, 247
 West Indies, 146, 148, 258, 279, 303, 316,
 317, 324, 332
 White Fathers, The, 257
 Whydah, *See* Ouidah
 Willoughby, Sir John, quoted, 228–229
 Winneba, 79, 81, 96
 Wissman, Herman von, 254
 Witu, 255
 wives, 6–8, 14, 15, 17, 20, 33, 34, 43, 75, 88,
 112, 118, 119, 124, 127, 162, 174–178,
 180, 183, 214–217, 229, 234, 235, 242
 Wolof state, 29
 women, 2, 5–7, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 27, 30,
 31, 34, 35, 63–65, 70, 75, 88, 90, 109,
 110, 113, 118, 121, 124–127, 129, 133,
 142, 158, 162, 167, 170–172, 175–178,
 187, 190, 196, 204, 208, 214, 216, 222,
 225, 228, 229, 231, 234, 235, 237–239,
 241, 242, 260, 261, 270–272, 275, 283,
 295, 296, 306, 320, 327, 329, 330,
 332–334, 338, 347, 348, 350, 351, 356,
 361, 363

- demand for, 35
 - occupations, 214
 - See also* concubines; harems; marriage; wives
- Worodugu, 193
- Wright, Joseph, 142, 323
- Wurno, 197
- Wuro Dole, 200

- Xhosa, 232

- Ya Kumba, 163–164
- yams, 161, 174, 175, 177, 179, 190, 193
- Yao, 77, 92, 152, 153, 222, 225, 229, 233, 256, 305, 308, 312, 326, 340, 341
- Yarse, 90, 311
- Yatenga, 187
- Yellow Duke, 179
- Yemen, 90
- Yola, 157, 173, 196, 197, 199–201, 265
- Yoruba states, 78, 158, 161, 162, 171, 172, 174, 177, 196, 201

- Zaire River, *See* Congo River
- See also* Congo
- Zambezi valley, 11, 33, 34, 76, 111, 132–134, 146, 152, 153, 219, 222, 228, 229, 236, 344
- Zamfara, 72, 173, 197, 213
- See also* Hausa states
- Zande region, 186, 204, 205
- Zanzibar, 94, 138, 139, 150–154, 221–224, 226, 253–255, 258, 268, 269, 274, 287–290, 339, 340, 347, 353, 356, 361
- Zaria, 156, 173, 186, 195, 197–199, 208, 311, 317, 327, 329, 335, 336, 338, 345, 349, 353, 359
- See also* Hausa states
- Zazzau, 31, 72
- See also* Hausa states
- Zeila, 25, 26, 149, 203
- Zinder, 173, 212, 213, 335
- Zubayr, al-, 203, 204, 337
- Zululand, 242
- Zumbo, 76, 94, 228

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